

“I WON’T BE RECONSTRUCTED”:
GOOD OLD REBELS, CIVIL WAR MEMORY, AND POPULAR SONG

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis traces the life of a song generally known as “I’m a Good Old Rebel” to explore the impact of popular culture on the creation of Civil War memory. Penned in the aftermath of Lee’s surrender and containing lines like, “I hate the Yankee Nation / And everything they do; / I hate the Declaration / Of Independence, too,” the “Good Old Rebel” typifies a certain brand of white southern identity that refuses Confederate defeat and sounds a call to arms for continued rebellion against the federal government. To begin, this study creates a biographical sketch of the author, who composed the words as a poem in 1867. Unlike most works on Civil War memory, this work then places emphasis on the period since the turn of the twentieth century up to the present, delving into the trajectory of the “Good Old Rebel” from a poem to a folk song to its most recent life on the Internet. In this way, the “Good Old Rebel” functions as a case study to explore the ways in which popular culture codifies reactionary political attitudes and sustains white southern resistance towards racial and class equality. Embracing an interdisciplinary approach, this thesis engages with historical and sociological methodologies and theories to critique the image of the unreconstructed white southerner created, in part, by this song.

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INTRODUCTION

ENCOUNTERING THE “GOOD OLD REBEL”

Often kitschy and without regard for the responsibilities of historical accuracy, popular culture remains a potent force in the shaping of collective memory concerning the American Civil War. From movies and rock music like *Gettysburg* or “The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down,” the venues of popular culture have repeatedly appropriated that conflict, twisting popular imagination and altering perceptions of the past in the process. The research at hand focuses on such phenomena through the lens of a single song regarding Confederate defeat, commonly known as “I’m a Good Old Rebel.” My first encounter with this song dates to the early 1990s, as a middle school-aged boy in the tiny northern Alabama town of Elkmont. Riding in the car with my father, a high school history teacher and Civil War enthusiast, we often listened to cassette tapes of living historian and multi-instrumentalist, Bobby Horton. Horton’s version of this song, which he lists as “Oh I’m a Good Old Rebel,” appears on his 1985 release, *Homespun Songs of the C. S. A., Volume 1*. There, interspersed among the predictable tracks like “Dixie,” “The Bonnie Blue Flag,” and “Maryland, My Maryland,” the “Good Old Rebel” stood ominous sentry, grabbing my attention from the first foreboding notes of its acapella minor-keyed melody. Written from the point of view of a Confederate veteran after Appomattox, the “Good Old Rebel” narrator spends six verses in the dialect of a poor white southerner, claiming, “I hates”

the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Union, the U. S. flag, the eagle, and of course, Yankees, concluding, “I won’t be reconstructed / And I don’t care a damn.”¹

Thanks to the vengeful, albeit aberrant, tone of the “Good Old Rebel,” I found myself simultaneously shocked and intrigued at the song’s conspicuous disregard for the bastions of United States nationalism that public education, the Boy Scouts, and the Southern Baptist Convention ingrained in my young mind as near-sacred patriotic symbols. Gone from this song were the buoyant themes of Confederate *esprit de corps* evident in the other tunes or the romantic pining of “Lorena” or “Home Sweet Home” that both sides enjoyed during the war and were included on Horton’s release. Furthermore, for me, a descendant of Union soldiers, this snarling screed seemed all the more frightening, as the narrator vowed, “Three hundred thousand Yankees / Is stiff in Southern dust . . . They died of Southern fever / And Southern steel and shot; / I wish it was three millions / Instead of what we got.”

Aside from my shock and fascination, exposure to the “Good Old Rebel” only furthered my familiarity with that version of white southern identity that resents authority and still bristles at the outcome of the Civil War. In the small town Deep South, an acquaintance with this strain of identity remains hard to escape, thanks to the slew of Confederate-themed material culture that still marks the landscape. From battle flag bumper stickers to the redneck pride espoused by Dixie Outfitters and the Confederate Cotton Company t-shirts, the Confederate legacy continually proliferates, irresponsibly and inarticulately mixing symbols of that misguided movement with the crass commercialism of truck stop souvenirs. Of course, musical accompaniments to this sort of insensitive signifying filled the record collections of its adherents, and the southern-centric tunes of Hank Williams, Jr. and Lynyrd Skynyrd remained popular even in my formative years of the late 1980s and early 1990s. While the pro-South themes of these

¹ Bobby Horton, *Homespun Songs of the C. S. A., Volume I*, self-released, 1985, cassette.

artists' songs "If the South Woulda Won" and "Sweet Home Alabama" stand as obvious examples of this white southern obstinacy in song, the present study argues that the "Good Old Rebel" offers a postbellum precedent for the unreconstructed South in popular music that still lingers in current U. S. culture.

Framework and Objectives

In his discussion of memory and history, historian Pierre Nora asserts that the mission of his study "is to pass French identity through a prism, to relate the symbolic whole to its symbolic fragments."² While Nora's goal deals with broad concepts of French nationalism, his expression of purpose serves as the driving inspiration for this study of white southern identity, with the "Good Old Rebel" functioning as that "symbolic fragment." By unpacking the production and consumption of this cultural artifact, my research hopes to demonstrate how an intense investigation of such a fragment may add to the understanding of particular southern identities that feed into the broader construction of regional character. This study does not assume that one song stands culpable for the creation of an entire branch of white southern identity. Instead, it submits that such a fragment facilitates an entry point into a larger discussion of identity that, optimistically, will offer new perspectives into persistent questions concerning the dialectical relationships between popular culture, Civil War memory, and the white South.

Exploring this topic ultimately attempts to answer how popular culture creates and expresses what Raymond Williams calls structures of feeling, or "a common set of perceptions and values shared by a particular generation" and "clearly articulated in particular and artistic

² Pierre Nora, "From *Lieux de memoire* to *Realms of Memory*," in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past, Volume 1: Conflicts and Divisions*, ed. Pierre Nora, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xix.

forms and conventions.”³ Songs like “Good Old Rebel” beg for analysis not simply as cultural texts of emotional expression, but as some of the most revealing documentary artifacts of structures of feeling. Williams explains that structures of feeling are “concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt” and that these structures are always changing over time in relation to “more formal or systematic beliefs.”⁴ The vehemently hateful lyrics of the “Good Old Rebel” oppose the more dominant and systematic postwar themes of reconciliation and reunion expressed elsewhere in popular song and literature, a trend that enjoyed peak proliferation around the turn of the twentieth century.⁵ Williams’s structures of feeling stands as a useful concept in this study as a term for the culmination of images and rhetoric embodied by the “Good Old Rebel.” Going forward, this study will use the phrase “Good Old Rebel” to represent these structures that fuel and inform the white southern imaginary at different moments in U. S. history. The “Good Old Rebel,” then, represents a way of feeling southern whiteness that one may adhere to at certain times and reject at others. The venues of popular culture function as its bivouac, where the “Good Old Rebel” awaits its call into battle whenever unreconstructed southerners feel their imaginary South under attack.

Additionally, describing the impact of the “Good Old Rebel” on collective memory will help explain the perpetual appeal of this way of feeling southern and the eventual establishment of the “Good Old Rebel” as an archetype of southern resistance that lingers even in contemporary U. S. culture. As Maurice Halbwachs states, “everything seems to indicate that

³ Jenny Bourne Taylor, “structure of feeling” in *Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*, ed. Michael Payne (Blackwell Publishing, Inc., 1997), accessed March 22, 2012, doi: 10.1111/b.9780631207535.1997.x

⁴ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 132.

⁵ For more on the sectional reconciliation, see David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001). In regard to reunion in literature, see Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present.”⁶ So, as one encounters the “Good Old Rebel” farther in time away from the Civil War, this song represents a reimagining of the past through which southerners who “won’t be reconstructed” are able to generate an identity that refuses defeat and hopes to continue the fight. Pierre Nora’s discussion of *lieux de memoire*, or realms of memory, offers further insight into the ways collective memory evolves into and from a specific site like a song, as well as its eventual symbolic value as an articulated voice of southern recalcitrance. Nora defines *lieu de memoire* as “any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community.”⁷ Explaining this theory further, Nora states, “Memory is . . . subject to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting . . . vulnerable in various ways to appropriation and manipulation.”⁸ Using this definition to consider the “Good Old Rebel” allows scholars to see behind the veil of cultural production and view the creation of a certain type of southern identity at one of its births. Nora’s definition of memory will also facilitate returns to the “Good Old Rebel” at different points in time, showing how the unreconstructed white identity evolves with each succeeding generation willing to internalize its message of hate and sustained rebellion.

Civil War memory has received an enormous amount of attention by historians over the last 20 years, generating an exciting and innovative trend in the study of the past. David Blight, influenced by Nora, defines collective memory as “the ways in which groups, peoples, or nations remember, how they construct versions of the past and employ them for self-understanding and to win power and place in an ever-changing present.” Continuing, Blight conveys that memory

⁶ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed., trans., and intro. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 39-40.

⁷ Nora, “From *Lieux de memoire* to *Realms of Memory*,” *Realms of Memory: vol. 1*, xvii.

⁸ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past, Volume 1: Conflicts and Divisions*, ed. Pierre Nora, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 3.

“is often treated as a sacred set of potentially absolute meanings and stories, possessed as the heritage or identity of a community. Memory is often owned; history, interpreted. Memory is passed down through generations; history is revised.”⁹ In other words, memory requires acquiescence and the silencing of dissent so that dominant narratives may be imparted to the masses and accepted as wholesale truth, often to hegemonic ends. The perceived truths of memory replace the actual experience of the past with constructed stories of partisanship. Sites of memory represent soliloquies, not dialogues. Investigating the “Good Old Rebel” as a site of memory production reveals how the post-Civil War generations internalized its truths and made it their own to form new structures of feeling.

Using the complicated legacy of the “Good Old Rebel” will also help fill two overlapping gaps in the historiography of Civil War memory, namely the effects of popular culture and the persistence of the unreconstructed white South. Despite suffering from a lack of serious consideration, popular culture stands as a formidable influence in the construction of Civil War memory. Indeed, creative expressions that deal in representations of the past deserve analysis as more than frivolous entertainment and instead as sites of memory creation. Building on Nora, John Storey suggests that “mass media and popular culture” function as sites of memory, as these venues “produce representations (‘cultural memorials’) with which we are invited to think, feel, and recognize the past.”¹⁰ Historian Nina Silber stands as one of the exceptions to the dearth in the study of Civil War-themed popular culture. In her work on postwar popular literature, Silber

⁹ David W. Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory, and the American Civil War* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 1, 2. For more on collective memory, especially in relation to the Confederacy see, William Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 49-76; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 64-97; Robert J. Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961-1965* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 51-87; John R. Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 142-178.

¹⁰ John Storey, *Inventing Popular Culture: From Folklore to Globalization* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 85.

maintains that collective memory, or perhaps more appropriately, collective forgetting, founded on sentimental literature facilitated sectional reconciliation. She also notes that writers like Thomas Nelson Page “assumed command of a far-reaching campaign which resuscitated many antebellum stereotypes and deployed a romantic image of the white and wealthy antebellum South throughout the cultural landscape.”¹¹ These generic plotlines cast a southern female love interest for a northern male, “relying on accepted cultural stereotypes of women’s emotional but submissive nature,” which in turn “allowed northern audiences . . . to ally themselves with a ‘rebel element’ that offered mainly a flirtatious defiance of union principles.”¹² Fueled by these stories, white northerners and southerners alike consumed popular, sentimental novels and plays in the post-Civil War period, applying a saccharine revisionist salve to the wounds of a desperately bloody war and facilitating a conciliatory tone to the memory of the Civil War that played into the principles of the Lost Cause.

A similar trend swept the sheet music industry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like the narratives in Silber’s study, popular songs also feminized the South and cast it as the subject of desire by a northern male. The title “There’s a Dixie Girl Who’s Longing for a Yankee Doodle Boy” from 1911 typifies this trend of northern suitors smitten by feminine southern charms. Without coincidence, two songs from the early twentieth century use New Hampshire and Tennessee as the northern and southern locales for their male and female characters. “When the Sun Goes Down in Old New Hampshire (Then My Heart Goes Down in Tennessee)” and “When a Boy From Old New Hampshire Loves a Girl From Tennessee,” published in 1915 and 1910, respectively, epitomize the sectional reunion via romantic love trope. The latter, whose lyricist, Robert F. Roden, also penned “There’s a Dixie Girl Longing for

¹¹ Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*, 4-5.

¹² *Ibid.*, 115.

a Yankee Doodle Boy,” relays the message of regional reconciliation with its chorus that explains the allaying of sectional animosity through matrimony, when “the strains of dear old Dixie’s songs, have their sweetest melody. / The North and South are here today / At the wedding of the Blue and Gray.” The accompanying cover art completes the message with a bride positioned under Confederate flag bunting holding the hand of her Yankee groom, who stands under the U. S. banner.¹³ Beyond these romantic themes, portrayals of the South as an exotic, pastoral land flooded the market and offered middle class consumers a link to an imaginary land of strumming banjos and contented slaves. Minstrel show tunes completed this movement towards regional reunion by glossing over lingering racial tension. Songs like 1874’s “I’m A-Gwine Down South” and “Happy Days in Dixie” from 1896 placed words in the mouths of African Americans who nostalgically long to return to an idealized and paternalistic version of slavery, thereby affirming white supremacist conceptions of blackness and positioning the abolition of slavery as a mistake.¹⁴

This glossy depiction of the South, sold for white middle class consumption, prevailed throughout the twentieth century, finding an especially potent voice in the white dominated

¹³ Robert F. Roden and George W. Meyer, “There’s a Dixie Girl Who’s Longing for a Yankee Doodle Boy” (New York: Haviland Publishing Company, 1911), Wade Hall Sheet Music Collection, W. S. Hoole Special Collections, University of Alabama; Dick Howard and Eugene Platzmann, “When the Sun Goes Down in New Hampshire (Then My Heart Goes Down in Tennessee)” (New York: Shapiro, Bernstein and Company, 1915), Wade Hall Sheet Music Collection; William Cahalin, Robert F. Roden, and J. Fred Helf, “When a Boy From Old New Hampshire Loves a Girl From Tennessee” (New York: J. Fred Helf, 1910), Wade Hall Sheet Music Collection.

¹⁴ Kerry Mills, “Happy Days in Dixie” (New York: F. A. Mills Music Publisher, 1896), Charles Templeton Sheet Music Collection, Mississippi State University accessed February 4, 2013, <http://digital.library.msstate.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SheetMusic/id/26240>; Will. S. Hays, “I’m A-Gwine Down South” (New York: J. L. Peters, 1874), American 19th Century Sheet Music, Copyright Deposits 1870-1885, Library of Congress, Music Division, accessed February 4, 2013, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/sm1874.10899>. For more on the appropriation of African American culture in minstrelsy, see Stephanie Dunson “Black Misrepresentation in Nineteenth-Century Sheet Music Illustration,” in *Beyond Blackface: African Americans and the Creation of American Popular Culture, 1890-1930* ed. by W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 45 - 65; W. T. Lhamon, Jr., *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance From Jim Crow to Hip Hop* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); T. D. Rice, *Jim Crow, American: Selected Songs and Plays*, ed. W. T. Lhamon, Jr. (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London and New York: Verso, 1991) 95 - 131.

country and western and bluegrass genres.¹⁵ Jim Cullen's *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past* investigates this occurrence, particularly the legacy of the Confederacy, as represented in 1970s rock and roll in a chapter titled "Reconstructing Dixie." Far from the "flirtatious defiance of union principles" proffered by Silber's analysis, the rebels that Cullen profiles stand as notably masculine and forcefully defiant in the face of any type of authority. Describing the general appeal of this genre, Cullen characterizes the essential 1970s southern rocker as someone, ostensibly male, who personified "a myth of the outlaw rebel, they played hard, drank too much, took too many drugs, and had a deeply ingrained distrust of authority, especially that of outsiders."¹⁶

The Florida-based, southern rock progenitors Lynyrd Skynyrd epitomize this obstinate, rock and roll rebel in Cullen's work. Cullen demonstrates the band's strong ties to Confederate images by describing their use of a large Confederate flag on stage as "an important visual cue for its music." Likewise, whenever touring in the South, "the group opened its shows by pumping a big band version of 'Dixie' through the public address system." These props and preludes positioned the band within the Confederate narrative and provided a knowing nod to the audience, who relished in associating themselves with such defiant anthems, such as their biggest hit, "Sweet Home Alabama." Cullen notes that while "Sweet Home Alabama" never openly invokes the Confederacy, it refutes the South's most vehement critic in music at the time, Neil Young, and defends the legacy of Alabama's most recognizable segregationist, Governor George

¹⁵ Regarding the alignment of white southerners and country music, see Nicholas Dawidoff, *In the Country of Country: A Journey to the Roots of American Music* (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc., 1998); Bill C. Malone, *Country Music U. S. A.: A Fifty Year History* (Austin: Published for the American Folklore Society by the University of Texas Press, 1968); Nick Toches, *Country: The Biggest Music in America* (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1977).

¹⁶ Jim Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 124.

Wallace.¹⁷ This use of Confederate imagery along with the open defiance of outside criticism and blanket defense of Wallace aligned Lynyrd Skynyrd with a romantic notion of the Confederate rebel. Although one may not immediately associate 1970s rockers and the Civil War, the imagery and attitudes espoused by these southerners fostered a collective memory of the Confederacy in which its iconic rebel represented a default, recalcitrant attitude to which whites identified.

Ted Ownby suggests a similar notion in his deconstruction of the same genre. In his essay “Manhood in 1970s Southern Rock,” Ownby notes the rebellious, hyper-masculine themes noticeable to anyone familiar with classic rock, especially in acts such as the Allman Brothers Band, Molly Hatchet, .38 Special, and again, Lynyrd Skynyrd. Ownby rightly places this attitude as an extension of the “helluvafella tradition,” first coined by W. J. Cash in *The Mind of the South*, which stated the objective of this particular strain of white, southern masculinity was to out fight, drink, love and sing any other man.¹⁸ In essence, the helluvafella personified rebellion and southern, masculine resistance to authority through an idealized performance of the unreconstructed southern identity in the late twentieth century. While Ownby’s connection between these 1970s white rockers and the obstinate southerners under Cash’s scrutiny remains correct, I believe the “Good Old Rebel” offers an even older precedent. My research will demonstrate how popular culture kept this song alive and document the various moments of its resurgence from the postbellum South to the contemporary day.

Christian McWhirter’s recent work probes the importance of music to the various causes and demographics represented in the Civil War and digs at the roots of some of the war’s most popular songs. McWhirter states that the music of the war linked “disparate listeners and

¹⁷ Ibid., 126-127.

¹⁸ Ted Ownby, “Manhood in 1970s Southern Rock,” in *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*, ed. Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan V. Donaldson (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1997), 371.

performers to the broader conflict,” suggesting that music “was more than simply a form of entertainment. Songs were cultural tools used by all to convey ideas and influence others.”¹⁹ He briefly mentions the “Good Old Rebel” in reference to “the unrepentant southern nationalism of the most resentful Confederate veterans” but fails to offer any detailed analysis of the song.²⁰ Instead, McWhirter knowingly, and expertly, reserves his most exhaustive study of songs in the postwar era for the perennial favorite, “Dixie.” While this work represents an important addition to the understanding of popular song in connection to the Civil War, McWhirter, by his own admission, offers only a starting point into this field and even calls for the kind of intensive analysis of individual songs that is hopefully provided here.²¹

Like many stories of the Civil War and its legacy, McWhirter downplays the importance of the lingering unreconstructed southerners in the postwar milieu. My research seeks to address this relatively neglected topic of the persistent unreconstructed South, especially as it informs Civil War memory. This conceptualization of the unreconstructed South as a present, driving force refutes interpretations of Civil War memory that end with the onset of World War I. Such studies prematurely announce the death of the Confederate legacy, as if it simply coincided with the lifespan of the majority of the war’s veterans. This version of history privileges a modernist evaluation of where Civil War memory resides and has effectively altered collective memories for scholars in the present. Gaines M. Foster most conspicuously proclaims the death knell of the Confederate legacy in his work, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*. His immaculately researched study provides an intricate look into the lives of Confederate veterans, surveying the gamut of

¹⁹ Christian McWhirter, *Battle Hymns: The Power and Popularity of Music in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

²¹ For more on the relationship between the Civil War and popular culture, see Karen L. Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie: How the South Was Created in American Popular Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know About the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Will Kaufman, *The Civil War in American Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

white southern responses to defeat. While Foster offers ample evidence of the unreconstructed sentiment in the likes of Jubal Early, the Ku Klux Klan, and Jefferson Davis, he exerts a noticeable amount of time dismissing their importance in shaping the Confederate legacy. In making this point, he claims that to emphasize the recalcitrant white South “as continued defiance underrates the importance of the concession southerners did make: abandonment of their vision of an independent nation of slaveholders.”²² Beyond this statement Foster does little to address the impact of the Confederate legacy on African American agency thanks to his shoehorning Confederate memory into an arbitrarily defined time period. In fact, Foster cuts off the Confederate legacy in all its incarnations after 1913 thanks to its commercialization and his assertion that it “no longer offered so splendid a model of social unity as it once had.”²³

The increasing death rate of Civil War veterans by 1913 certainly meant a decrease in both veterans’ reunions and other commemoration events like the erection of monuments. However, those types of events stand as markers of reactionary ideologies towards a particular historical cycle, specifically modernity. Historian John Neff asserts that the 1914 erection of the Confederate monument in Arlington National Cemetery paradoxically represents both a continuation in the expression of sectionalism on the landscape, as well as the high water mark of its memorialization in stone. Neff states that the monument, “within the sacrosanct grounds of Arlington, serves, not only as a commemoration of the southern soldier dead, but also as a monument to their survivors, the veterans and women who championed the Lost Cause.”²⁴ Such commemorations soared in popularity in the U. S. and beyond during the early twentieth century. White southerners’ penchant for monuments and commemorations arguably rivals any other

²² Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 20.

²³ *Ibid.*, 178.

²⁴ Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead*, 227.

demographic in the world, erecting 306 monuments between 1900 and 1912.²⁵ To contemporary observers, those weathered stone glyphs dotting courthouse lawns and cemetery plots may hold an innocuous presence as anachronistic reminders of either antiquated racism or mourned idealism, depending on the individual. Yet at the time of their erection, such commemorations represented a new trend on the southern landscape to reassure the South of its whiteness and rightness.

By tracing the “Good Old Rebel” from the years immediately following Lee’s surrender to the present day, this study suggests the limitations of previous studies, which often conclude in the mid 1910s, just before the U. S. entrance into World War I.²⁶ While a certain type of Confederate legacy certainly diminished in this time period, namely the Lost Cause, others emerged in its wake. My research suggests that if the centrality of Confederate memory appears to diminish in the early twentieth century, then it is only because its cause merged with dominant structures of feeling that promoted U. S. nationalism and its inherent rubric of white supremacy. To understand the continuation of the Confederate cause past the usual point of study, I suggest using a new nomenclature. Rather than referring to the Confederate legacy in terms coined by Confederate apologists of the immediate postwar years as the Lost Cause, I believe that the term Same Cause better describes the Confederate legacy, especially in terms of the unreconstructed white South. Thomas L. Connelly and Barbara L. Bellows rightly gesture towards a more nuanced terminology with their Inner and National Lost Cause divisions and profess the

²⁵ Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 273. For more on the global trend of monument erection and its relationship to modernity, see Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4; Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 270-272. For more on this European trend in relation to modernity, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishers, 1990), 262, 271-272.

²⁶ Most previous memory studies focus on the lifespan of the Lost Cause. For examples, see Blair, *Cities of the Dead*; Blight, *Race and Reunion*; Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*; Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead*; Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*.

importance of its study in the late twentieth century. However, even these terms still rely on the romanticization of the defeated Confederacy first put forward by Edward A. Pollard's 1866 propaganda.²⁷ Essentially, if one believes the Confederacy's founding speeches and documents, which position it as the political defender of white supremacy and African slavery, and one recognizes that sectional reunion and the end of Reconstruction were predicated on that same white supremacy and the disfranchisement of African Americans, then the Confederate cause was never lost but remained true to its course from 1861 forward, winning converts from beyond the geographical borders of the South along the way.

Thus, the Same Cause resides in both sympathetic representations of the Confederacy and in the U. S. nationalism that welcomed white southerners back into the fold, while dismissing the rights of African Americans. These trends reached their pinnacles in 1896 with the approval of *Plessy v. Ferguson* and the U. S. involvement in the Spanish-American War in 1898, echoed in the popular songs profiled above. With this in mind, the "Good Old Rebel" represents a contested ideological site, alongside other ways of remembering the war, vying for the memory of Confederate defeat. Specifically, this study suggests that the violent, vengeful attitude of the "Good Old Rebel" signifies this Same Cause, rendering defeat intolerable and calling for a return to battle to counter the emasculating effects of surrender and African American empowerment.

Overview of Chapters

The three chapters of this thesis are divided chronologically, roughly along the divisions of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. Beginning with the first known publication of these words, this research charts the trajectory of the "Good Old Rebel," using it

²⁷ Thomas L. Connelly and Barbara L. Bellows, *God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and the Southern Mind* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Edward A. Pollard, *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates, Comprising a Full and Authentic Account of the Rise and Progress of the Late Southern Confederacy, the Campaigns, Battles, Incidents, and Adventures of the Most Gigantic Struggle of the World's History* (New York: E. B. Treat, 1866).

as a vehicle to understand how cultural expressions inform a white southern imaginary that sustains conservative political and social ideologies. From its inception as a poem to its incarnation as a folk song to recent iterations on social media, the “Good Old Rebel” has come to stand in as an anthemic defense of an imaginary unreconstructed white South that exists beyond the historical and political boundaries of the region. Vetting these issues will illuminate a white South that, no longer able to fight Yankees, wrought its vengeance and anger over defeat on emancipated African Americans and other reminders of Confederate defeat. Additionally, this inquiry considers the “Good Old Rebel” as a site of cultural memory production to understand the dialectical relationship between popular culture and the hegemonic potential of the legacy of the Civil War.

Chapter one explores the roots of the “Good Old Rebel” and the biographical details of its originator. While poet and Confederate veteran Innes Randolph stands widely recognized as the likely author of the words, his work found its way into print and the popular imagination well before the “Good Old Rebel” was ever attributed to him. Appearing as both a poem and a song in the immediate years after the Civil War, Randolph’s poem filtered throughout the nation under various titles and author credits, finding publication in newspapers, poetry collections, magazines, and folk song compilations. The lack of a clear author until after the dissemination of the words, coupled with the poem’s use of dialect, led many who encountered this poem and its song version to consume its message as the genuine expression of a white unreconstructed southerner. However, my study suggests that Randolph, an educated man from an influential Virginia family, actually wrote these words as an elitist, parodic performance of poor white sentiment surrounding Confederate defeat. Regardless of the author’s original intentions, Randolph’s words have recurrently found acceptance as a sincere voice of recalcitrance and

continued rebellion, freezing in time the most bitter postwar sentiments and making white southern attitudes about the Civil War seem unalterable. Due to this internalization, the “Good Old Rebel” emerges as a placeholder and a roadblock, reminding its adherents how to react against perceived threats to the unreconstructed versions of white southern identity and imagining that identity as immovable and unchangeable.

The second chapter traces the “Good Old Rebel” through the early to mid twentieth century, when it found embrace as a folksong and marketing tool. By tagging along with this song, this study moves through the U. S. fascination with folk music and into the commercialization of the Confederate legacy surrounding the Civil War Centennial. Much like the erection of monuments to the Lost Cause generation, an obsession with folk culture characterized the part of the next generation’s reaction to modernity. A mission of looking to the past for authentic folk cultures pervaded scholarly thinking of the early to mid twentieth century, especially in terms of music, and the “Good Old Rebel” found its way into several folksong collections by the 1960s. In a turn towards commercialization, Rebel Yell Whiskey appropriated “Good Old Rebel” as promotional material in the 1960s around the time of the Civil War Centennial. The research presented here will investigate the rise of this whiskey and why its association with this song mirrors the ironic roots of the song’s creation. Taken out of its context as poem or folk oddity, this research posits that the “Good Old Rebel” served as a dangerous historical reminder for Cold War Americans in search of continuity with the past in a postmodern age of rupture.

Chapter three seeks to understand the problematic ethnicization of southern whiteness in the 1970s and 1980s and why adherents to such conceptions of culture align with the sentiments of the “Good Old Rebel.” As white southerners imagined themselves as an ethnicity, like more

recent white immigrants to the U. S., they too adopted the language of victimization, as if southern whiteness was under attack. Within this context, the “Good Old Rebel” has found repeated appropriation as an expression of defiance and defense against what unreconstructed white southerners claim as the homogenizing effects of multiculturalism and political correctness. My research demonstrates the role of the “Good Old Rebel” as a defender of this ostensibly threatened southern whiteness and its adoption among neo-Confederates and other constituents of conservative ideologies. To do so, I begin by documenting the theorization of ethnicized southern whiteness by academics and neo-Confederates. The chapter then moves to the use of the song in the 1980 film *The Long Riders* and transitions to the Internet, where the “Good Old Rebel” functions as a defender of an imagined white southern distinctiveness. Websites and user-generated social media sites like YouTube offer a particularly poignant look into the “Good Old Rebel,” as its shockingly hate-filled lyrics find appropriation with fans in the digital age. YouTube uploads and their respective comments sections give a firsthand account of Civil War memory as it is actively internalized and then regurgitated behind the veil of anonymity that such sites afford their users. Like hastily scrawled graffiti on a men’s room wall, YouTube comments offer a peak into the minds of “Good Old Rebel” adherents, where they voice their association with its sentiment removed from the repercussions of political or social responsibilities.

Ultimately, my consideration of the “Good Old Rebel” endeavors to highlight popular culture’s ability to shape imaginaries and inform collective memories. Tracking the presence of the “Good Old Rebel” requires bibliographic excavation. Unlike a nationally renowned song of the Civil War era, like “Dixie,” the “Good Old Rebel” was never sung by Shirley Temple, compressed into a car horn, or blared at southern college football games. Instead, one must dig

to find the traces of this song as generations of southerners passed it along through oral tradition and episodic publication trends. This methodological approach allows a glimpse into the version of Civil War memory that this song created as succeeding generations breathed new life into its words in new contexts. By exploring the routes and roots of culture creation, scholars offer a way to dismantle artifacts, like songs, brands, literature, and cinema, which feed ideologies of inequality. I believe this song represents one such artifact. In disregarding the influence of such cultural expressions, historians and cultural critics risk underestimating the power of these splinters that, when taken together, form the platforms of repressive cultural identities. My work hopes to combine historical and cultural analysis in such a way that lends insight into the tangled roots of regional identities like that of the unreconstructed southerner and its relationship to the cultural expressions that feed it, exemplified here by the “Good Old Rebel.”

1. FROM PARODY TO ANTHEM:

ROOTS OF THE “GOOD OLD REBEL” IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In 1898, the Baltimore, Maryland publishing house Williams and Wilkins issued a brief collection of verse by Innes Randolph, simply titled *Poems*. As a journalist, attorney, musician, and sculptor, Randolph left behind an array of creative expressions upon his death in 1887 at the age of fifty. His son, Harold, compiled the poems for this publication from original manuscripts after his father's death. The subjects of Randolph's poems range from personal ruminations on the life of an artist to racist depictions of African Americans and commemorative verses penned for Confederate memorial ceremonies.²⁸ Among the thirty-two poems selected for publication, the younger Randolph included “The Good Old Rebel,” allegedly written in 1867, which reads,

Oh, I'm a good old Rebel,
Now that's just what I am;
For this “fair Land of Freedom”
I do not care a dam.
I'm glad I fit against it -
I only wish we'd won,
And I don't want no pardon
For anything I done.

I hates the Constitution,
This great Republic, too;
I hates the Freedmen's Buro,
In uniforms of blue.
I hates the nasty eagle,

²⁸ Innes Randolph, *Poems*, comp. Harold Randolph (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1898), preface, Google e-book.

With all his brag and fuss;
The lyin', thievin' Yankees,
I hates'em wuss and wuss. I hate the Yankee Nation
And everything they do;
I hate the Declaration
Of Independence, too.
I hates the glorious Union,
'Tis dripping with our blood;
I hates the striped banner-
I fit it all I could.
I followed old Mars' Robert
For four year, near about,
Got wounded in three places,
And starved at Pint Lookout.
I cotch the roomatism
A-campin' in the snow,
But I killed a chance of Yankees -
I'd like to kill some mo'.

Three hundred thousand Yankees
Is stiff in Southern dust;
We got three hundred thousand
Before they conquered us.
They died of Southern fever
And Southern steel and shot;
I wish it was three millions
Instead of what we got.

I can't take up my musket
And fight'em now no more,
But I ain't agoin' to love'em,
Now that is sartin sure.
And I don't want no pardon
For what I was and am;
I won't be reconstructed,
And I don't care a dam.²⁹

Before exploring the life of the "Good Old Rebel" as a poem and then a song, one must first understand the life of its author, his social standing, his experience in the Civil War, and his relationship to place, specifically the Upper South of Virginia and Maryland. Randolph was born to an old Virginia family in 1837 at Frederick County, Virginia to James Innes Randolph

²⁹ Ibid., 30-31.

and Marguerite Susan Peyton Armistead, constituting a “direct line of descent from William of ‘Turkey Island,’ and a great-grandfather was Colonel James Innes, an Attorney General of Virginia.” Far from the unlearned narrator the poem suggests, Randolph received his education in the state of New York, first at Hobart College and then, the State and National Law School. Upon completing his degree, Randolph moved to Washington, D. C., where his family had lived since President William Henry Harrison had called on Randolph’s sister, Lucy, to serve “as White House hostess during Mrs. Harrison’s indisposition.” In the nation’s capitol, Randolph met Anna Clare King, and the two married in 1859.³⁰

While not much is known concerning Randolph’s prewar sentiments, correspondence between his mother, Susan, and her eldest son, Peyton, offers a glimpse into the Randolph household in the days leading up to war. Far from a fire-eating secessionist, Susan Randolph displayed a balance of attitudes towards disunion, rebuking Peyton for joining a rifle unit in Alabama and expressing compassion for the newly elected Lincoln, while displaying contempt for the Republican Party in general. On January 6, 1861, Peyton wrote to his mother that he hoped he had “not frightened all of you so much by my disunion sentiments that you have concluded me to be a regular outsider.” To the prospect of Alabama’s secession, Peyton wrote, “The Convention meets tomorrow and may make me a foreigner to you Citizens of the U. S. . . . The sentiment of the people in my vicinity is altogether for secession, there is no excitement and bluster about the matter but a quiet, sturdy resolution and determination much more to be regarded than all the row

³⁰ Curtis Carroll Davis, “Elegant Old Rebel,” *Virginia Cavalcade*, Summer 1958, 44. Davis was a noted biographer and literary historian. For examples of Davis’s work, see *Chronicler of the Cavaliers: A Life of the Virginia Novelist, Dr. William A. Caruthers* (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1953); *Revolution’s Godchild: The Birth, Death, and Regeneration of the Society of the Cincinnati in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1976); *That Ambitious Mr. Legare: The Life of James M. Legare of South Carolina, Including a Collected Edition of His Verse* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1971). Davis also penned Randolph’s entry in *Southern Writers: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed., Robert Bain, Joseph M. Flora, and Louis Rubin, Jr. (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 368-369.

that could be gotten up.”³¹ Susan intimates motherly caution towards political issues of the day and great distress over Peyton’s decision to join the Eutaw Rifles, a volunteer regiment formed in Alabama, where he had lived since at least 1858. Regarding his decision to join the military, Susan writes, “I do not wish to reproach you for the step you have taken, but for which I cannot feel any thing but sadness, deep heartfelt sadness.” She then used guilt and disparagement towards Alabama to convey her feelings, baffled that “Alabama had a stronger claim on her son of a few years adoption than your old mother has for her own precious child.”³² Just a week later she wrote again to Peyton to remind him to go to church and to avoid the pitfalls of military life, apparently still unconvinced of the necessity or wisdom of her eldest son’s decision. She then oddly expressed sympathy for the recently elected U. S. president. She complained, “Poor Lincoln is completely worn out with attending to the unfortunate demands of his clamorous party . . . Every time your father comes from down the street it is with his face elongated to find that another and another of the old American [Whig] party have gone over to the Republicans until now he and his family almost stand alone.”³³

Yet after the firing on Fort Sumter, she began a letter to Peyton with a drastic change in tone, writing, “Hurrah! for the Southern Confederacy” and generally conveyed a sense of excitement towards the threat of war. This letter also carried the first word of Innes in relation to the Civil War, describing him and brother John as “crazy to be South.”³⁴ At that point, the Randolphs still resided in Washington, D. C., where James Innes Randolph, Sr. had once served

³¹ Peyton Randolph to Susan Randolph, January 6, 1861, Randolph Family Papers, Box 5, Folder 3, John T. Harris Papers, 1771-1937, SC# 2025, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA. on deposit from Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society, Dayton, VA., housed in Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.

³² Susan Randolph to Peyton Randolph, March 17, 1861, Randolph Family Papers, Box 5, Folder 3.

³³ Susan Randolph to Peyton Randolph, March 24, 1861, Randolph Family Papers, Box 5, Folder 3.

³⁴ Susan Randolph to Peyton Randolph, April 14, 1861, Randolph Family Papers, Box 5, Folder 3.

as a Congressional clerk and Susan was employed as a schoolteacher.³⁵ Innes's desire "to be South" included a wish to join the military in some capacity, enlisting in the Provisional Army of the State of Virginia on May 8, 1861 as a Second Lieutenant, Engineers.³⁶ By May 11, 1861 the Randolphs had removed to Richmond, and Susan relayed Innes's employment as an engineer, "laying out the defenses of this city."³⁷

A letter from September 8, 1861 offers a rare firsthand account of Randolph's wartime disposition. Still stationed in Richmond under the assignment of designing the city's fortifications, Innes interjected a brief message to his brother Peyton in their mother's letter while she took a break from writing. He explained that the commissions in the Virginia Provisional Army faced annulment except for those, like his, in the Engineer Corps. He then stated his willingness and desire to see action outside of Richmond upon the completion of the city's defenses. "Our turn will come then I suppose . . . Eh bien! perhaps it may be the means of getting me down to Manassas at last." With the swagger of an inexperienced soldier, Innes bragged to his brother about the heavy guns and breastworks that surrounded Richmond. To the prospect of battle in the city, Innes pleaded to the already deployed Peyton, "I believe that if Richmond were attacked she would make a spirited defense without calling a soldier from one of our moving armies . . . How I wish I could be with you . . . I want to be in aggressive warfare. I am sick of this."³⁸

Innes's wish was granted and he found travel as a cartographer under Colonel Walter Gwyn and later with General Richard S. Ewell.³⁹ The family letters make note of his travels, with

³⁵ "Guide to the John T. Harris Papers, 1771-1937 (Bulk 1850-1900): Biographical Information," accessed January 15, 2013, [<http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=jmu/vihart00028.xml>].

³⁶ Davis, "Elegant Old Rebel," *Virginia Cavalcade*, 45.

³⁷ Susan Randolph to Peyton Randolph, May 11, 1861, Randolph Family Papers, Box 5, Folder 3.

³⁸ Innis Randolph to Peyton Randolph, September 8, 1861, Randolph Family Papers, Box 5, Folder 3.

³⁹ Susan Randolph to Mollie Randolph, February 9, 1863, Randolph Family Papers, Box 5, Folder 4; Davis, "Elegant Old Rebel," *Virginia Cavalcade*.

his mother referring to him as a “complete Bird of passage. First he was stationed at Petersburg, then at Kinston N. C., then at Greenville and finally at Weldon where living on fresh pork and nothing else completely used him up and got his stomach in such a disordered state that he was sick in bed till the surgeon ordered him home . . . poor fellow he will return to N. C. on Saturday.”⁴⁰ Around this time, Susan also revealed her son’s elitist tendencies that found later expression in the “Good Old Rebel.” In January of 1863, while stationed in Greenville, North Carolina, Randolph wrote to his mother, and according to her, “was quite unwell and as blue as indigo. He is in charge of the Tar river defenses. He appears to think that he has reached the climax of N.C. stupidity. He is in the family of a Mr Peebles whom he says is a good sort of a stupid fellow and that his wife is a match for him. He has no books, no society, no any thing but ignorance.”⁴¹

Knowing the attitude of the postwar “Good Old Rebel,” speculation suggests that Mr. Peebles offered a prototype for the poor unreconstructed southerner of Randolph’s artistic expression. Indeed, wartime contact with the uneducated class of rural southerners likely infuriated Randolph, who hailed from an erudite and politically connected family of upper class Virginia. To his family’s relief, the Confederate army eventually granted Randolph the respite from contact with the lower castes of southern society that he craved, ordering him back to Richmond in 1863. The family letters show that he spent the remainder of war mostly stationed around that city and fluctuating in various degrees of health and active duty. Once returned, he joined the literary and social elite of the Confederate capital in a group called the Mosaic Club, which functioned as a salon for those learned and artistic rebels in the final years of the war. This club offered Randolph a chance to socialize with the few fellow officers and graceful women that

⁴⁰ Susan Randolph to Mollie Randolph, February 9, 1863, Randolph Family Papers, Box 5, Folder 4.

⁴¹ Susan Randolph to unknown, January 10, 1863, Randolph Family Papers Box 5, Folder 4.

appreciated his sense of position and his sense of humor in regard to the Confederacy's hoi polloi.⁴²

Describing the mood in Richmond in late 1864, Randolph's sister, Nan, wrote to Peyton that "The vile yankees seemed swarming in like bees from every quarter. Even Innes looked serious and disponding [*sic*] and gave Anna some very sage advise [*sic*] as to what she was to do if the yankees got here."⁴³ This minor detail, "even Innes looked serious," as if this demeanor proved an exception to his normal behavior, presages the characterizations of Randolph that emerge from other biographical accounts. Writing after the war, Thomas Cooper DeLeon, an acquaintance of Randolph's and a fellow Mosaic Club member, offered details concerning the "Good Old Rebel" author's life and personality. DeLeon's books read like posthumous society columns, chronicling the exploits of the Confederacy's literati. Randolph appears in numerous places throughout these volumes and always by reference to his sense of humor. In a chapter titled "Wit and Humor of the War," DeLeon speculated, "perhaps no pen, or no brush, in all the South limned with bolder stroke the follies, or the foibles, of his own, than did that of Innes Randolph . . . later to win national fame by his 'Good Old Rebel' song." DeLeon then offered a sample of Randolph's satirical verse, penned after Bragg's failed campaign in Tennessee. Apparently, Randolph found humorous inspiration in Confederate defeat, writing, "For Bragg did well. Ah! Who could tell / What merely human mind could augur / That they would run from Lookout Mountain / Who fought so well at Chickamauga!" DeLeon then boasted again of Randolph's agile wit, explaining, "it was at the Mosaic that Innes Randolph first sang his now

⁴² Davis, "Elegant Old Rebel," *Virginia Cavalcade*, 45; T. C. DeLeon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals: An Inside View of Life in the Southern Confederacy, From Birth to Death; From Original Notes Collated in the Years 1861-1865* (Mobile, Alabama: The Gossip Printing Company, 1892), 310 - 311.

⁴³ Nan Randolph to Peyton Randolph, May 13, 1864, Randolph Family Papers, Box 5, Folder 4.

famous ‘Good Old Rebel’ song; and there his marvelous quickness was Aaron’s rod to swallow all the rest.”⁴⁴

DeLeon’s next published account of Confederate high society appeared sixteen years later in 1909 under the title *Belles, Beaux, and Brains of the 60s*, and repeatedly mentions Randolph in terms of his vulpine wit and astute observational skills, labeling him the “facile prince of war wits.” Randolph’s refinement and aptitude for the arts, in spite of his humorous streak, was repeated in this work, as DeLeon states, “what he did *not* do, and do well, is not recorded on memory’s tablet.”⁴⁵ Continuing later in the text, DeLeon calls Randolph,

that Briareus in accomplishments, sketched almost as he wrote, improvised and sang. He was a lightning illustrator and ever in demand for the unceasing ‘shows’ of those dear women who never wearied in well-doing. Sometimes Randolph’s programs in poetry and picture were better worth the entrance fee than the entertainment they explained. Unhappily, not one of them is now in existence of at least traceable by diligent search. He was a natural but untaught sculptor; several death masks and a bust of himself being especially fine.⁴⁶

A detail from Randolph’s mother corroborates DeLeon’s depiction of Randolph’s dramatic flair. On New Year’s Eve of 1865, Susan wrote to her daughter Mollie, saying, “I think Innes is in a fair way to be spoiled on Friday evening. He received a petition signed by Sally Grathen, Gussie Daniel, and ever so many of that set, begging him to come to a party at a house where they were staying in Goochland.” Apparently, Randolph’s attendance guaranteed the necessary entertainment, as the ladies wrote, “promising to send to the depot for him, assuring

⁴⁴ DeLeon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 303, 311.

⁴⁵ DeLeon, *Belles, Beaux, and Brains of the 60s* (New York: G. W. Willingham, 1909), 257, 259.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 280.

him that his presence was indispensable, as they wanted to get up some private theatricals.”⁴⁷

“Elegant Old Rebel,” a 1958 article by Curtis Carroll Davis in the *Virginia Cavalcade*, echoed DeLeon and heaped praises on Randolph for his noted intellect and sense of humor, detailing his artistic talents in literature, drawing, sculpting, and music. Based on this characterization, Davis surmised that “it is difficult to believe that he shared literally the nastier sentiments expressed in the poem.” In fact, when traveling to England as a newspaper correspondent in 1884 for the *Baltimore American*, Davis claimed that Randolph “discovered, to his surprise, that ‘The Good Old Rebel’ was not only widely popular but identified as the stereotype of the Unreconstructed Southerner’s voice.”⁴⁸

With these details in mind, one may assume that Randolph indeed wrote the “Good Old Rebel” in parody of an imagined poor white, illiterate demographic of the ex-Confederacy, continuing in the comedic, theatrical traditions he explored in other works and social settings. Yet as a Confederate veteran, Randolph likely *did* experience a semblance of the bitterness expressed in the “Good Old Rebel.” His family had to leave their home in Washington, D. C., Randolph’s father died while he was stationed away from Richmond; he felt his wife was in danger from Union forces; he suffered the usual soldierly miseries that accompany poor diet and little rest; and perhaps most importantly to the creation of the “Good Old Rebel,” army life forced contact with lower class of white southerners.⁴⁹ These trials of wartime likely left Randolph as bitter as any other ex-Confederate who served the South and its short-lived attempt at nationhood.

Through the synoptic biography included as a preface to *Poems*, Harold, Randolph’s son, stated that at the end of the war, his father, as “with so many of his brothers of the South, confronted not the questions of artistic or literary development, but the more immediate problem

⁴⁷ Susan Randolph to Mollie Randolph, December 31, 1865, Randolph Family Papers, Box 5, Folder 4.

⁴⁸ Davis, “Elegant Old Rebel,” *Virginia Cavalcade*, 45-46.

⁴⁹ Randolph Family Papers; Davis, “Elegant Old Rebel,” *Virginia Cavalcade*.

of bread and butter.” Harold’s interpretation perhaps represents the most intimate historical memory impacted by the “Good Old Rebel,” as Randolph influenced the meaning of the war for his son, who suggests that his father was a man brimming with artistic potential, only to be stifled in the prime of his life. The younger Randolph informs the reader that his father led his life as a tortured artist, who came of age in antebellum Virginia “at a time when the old-fashioned, narrow ideas concerning the ‘pursuits proper for a gentleman’ held full sway.” Harold notes with disdain that his father “was not permitted to turn his attention to music, painting, sculpture or literature, in any one of which, with proper training, he might have accomplished great things.” Instead, he reports that his father served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, which occurred “at the critical moment of his life and robbed him of four of its best years.”⁵⁰

Harold provides no exact date for the poem’s production but claims his father wrote it soon after the addition of John Marshall’s likeness to the Virginia statesmen memorial, centered on the George Washington statue in Richmond.⁵¹ According to the Virginia Historic Landmarks Committee, sculptors added the statue of Marshall to the pantheon of Founding Fathers who stand at the base of the mounted Washington in June 1867.⁵² Randolph must have felt a particular surge of bitterness at the time of the statue’s erection, as this event also inspired his poem “John Marshall,” subtitled “Concerning the Raising of the Bronze Statue of Chief Justice Marshall.” With a sarcastic tone towards what he perceived as the persecutions of Reconstruction, the poem began,

We are glad to see you, John Marshall, my boy,
So fresh from the chisel of Rogers;
Go take your stand on the monument there,
Along with the other old codgers;

⁵⁰ Randolph, *Poems*, first and second pages of preface.

⁵¹ Ibid., fourth and fifth pages of preface.

⁵² *Notes on Virginia*, 23 (1983): 2, accessed November 18, 2011, www.vacapitol.org/pdfs/1983NotesOnVirginia23.pdf.

With Washington, Jefferson, Henry and such,
Who sinned with a great transgression,
In their old-fashioned notions of freedom and right
And their hatred of wrong and oppression.
You come rather late to your pedestal, John,
Far sooner you ought to have been here;
For the volume you hold is no longer the law,
And this is no longer Virginia.
The old Marshall-law you expounded of yore
Is not at all to the purpose,
And the martial law of the new brigadier
Is stronger than habeas corpus.

Continuing for another twenty-six lines, Randolph used the rest of the poem to ask a series of rhetorical questions to the bronzed, Revolutionary Virginians, asking to their reactions in regard to the South's defeat and subsequent military rule of Reconstruction. The author ended with George Washington, deciding that the first president would descend "from his big brass horse, / And cover his face at our shame, / For the land of his birth is now 'District One,' / Virginia was once the name!"⁵³ Clearly, Reconstruction left Randolph as bitter as other ex-Confederates, spawning deep-seated attitudes of resentment that found expression again in the "Good Old Rebel."

Furthermore, Harold's preface relays that the Women's Confederate Memorial Association solicited a commemorative poem from his father "about a year after the war." The result, "Twilight at Hollywood," accompanied Decoration Day services at Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery in 1866. In regard to this poem, Harold Randolph reminds readers, that the South was then passing through the scorching ordeal of 'reconstruction,' and the spirit that inspired the enthusiasm of 1861 was still alive, though broken and wasted by defeat, and the utterances of this poem touched very deeply the

⁵³ Randolph, *Poems*, 28-29. "John Marshall" was also published in *Confederate Veteran*, July 1898. This publication refers to the author as Innis [sic] Randolph and claims the poem for the placement of the John Marshall statue but states the year as 1866.

sentiment of the time - sentiments now almost forgotten - faded memories without bitterness. But Southern pride in the undaunted gallantry of the 'boys in gray' will endure forever.⁵⁴

Even within the confines of Hollywood Cemetery, Innes Randolph found a way to rally the unreconstructed spirit as a means of commemoration. Calling to the nearby James River for inspiration, Randolph concludes his otherwise mournful poem, writing,

O river, though they moulder in the dust,
Let them not perish from our hearts - speak on,
And fill us with thy rushing energy,
That as the gathered freshets of the spring
Burst upward through the shackles of the ice,
So we at last may dash our fetters off
For until then these men have died in vain.⁵⁵

These poems offer a glimpse of Randolph's emotions over the Confederate defeat in the years immediately following surrender. Granted, by 1884 Randolph was surprised to find the "Good Old Rebel" received as a genuine expression of the unreconstructed southern identity. But from the other poems written in the immediate postwar years, one may deduce that Randolph indeed experienced the feelings of bitterness and resentment, if not hate, intoned by his most lasting creation, the "Good Old Rebel."

Perhaps unwittingly and through his noted sense of humor, Randolph summoned and defined a white southern structure of feeling for those reluctant to concede defeat, those Same Cause subscribers in his generation of ex-Confederates. Again, any emphasis on humor does not discount the idea that Randolph felt some of the embarrassment and resentment expressed in his poem's words. C. Vann Woodward notes that "those creative spirits" such as Randolph "who survived the ordeal of war and clung to their purpose found the odds heavily against them" in the

⁵⁴ Randolph, *Poems*, third and fourth pages of preface.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

postwar years. In a brief profile of the most recognizable Confederate veteran poet, Woodward stated, “Sidney Lanier’s nightmarish struggle against poverty and hemorrhages was only one of the tragedies of the period.” Nevertheless, Lanier sought refuge, along with Randolph, in Baltimore, Maryland, a city that “was at one and the same time the last refuge of the Confederate spirit in exile and a lying-in hospital for the birth of the New Order.” Lanier, five years Randolph’s junior, also found career stability near the end of his life in Baltimore at Johns Hopkins University’s Peabody Institute. This Peabody Institute also eventually employed Harold, Randolph’s son, as director and now awards an endowed prize in his name.⁵⁶ Lanier and Randolph were very much kindred spirits. Both belonged to the Wednesday Club, an arts society in postwar Baltimore, where Randolph excelled “as actor and as satirist of Italian opera.” He even served as one of Lanier’s pallbearers in 1881.⁵⁷ However, while Lanier garnered acclaim for his verse depicting the valiant South and the romantic Lost Cause, Randolph earned a reputation in the postbellum arts scene again for his wit and sense of humor.

Considering Baltimore as a space that welcomed factions of both the antebellum and postwar Souths illuminates its attractiveness as a destination for the ex-Confederate literati. Literary historian Frank R. Shivers, Jr. details the city’s “ambiguous position” as a fulcrum in the balance between Union and secessionist sentiment both before and after the Civil War. While the city maintained its antebellum and aristocratic social trappings, its geographical and political distance from the Confederacy “gave perspective and with it a chance to criticize the Old South. In doing so, writers such as Sidney Lanier nurtured the New South there.”⁵⁸ Shivers’s evidence

⁵⁶ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Littlefield Fund for Southern History of the University of Texas/ Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 162; For information regarding the Harold Randolph Prize, see <http://www.peabody.jhu.edu/giving/friedbergsociety/Scholarshipandprizelisting.html>.

⁵⁷ Davis, “Elegant Old Rebel,” *Virginia Cavalcade*, 46-47.

⁵⁸ Frank R. Shivers, Jr., *Maryland Wits and Baltimore Bards: A Literary History with Notes on Washington Writers* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1985), 132.

supports the friendship between Lanier and Randolph, mentioning their mutual participation in the Wednesday Club. In regard to the “Good Old Rebel,” Shivers asserts that the poem originally consisted of only four verses, with more words added as the poem made its way into the popular repertoire. If one believes Shivers, then Randolph’s friendship with Lanier may account for the mentioning of the Union war prison Point Lookout in the “Good Old Rebel.” As Confederate soldiers, Lanier, along with friend and fellow Baltimore poet and scholar, Father John Bannister Tabb, were imprisoned at the southern Maryland camp.⁵⁹ In the event that Randolph added more verses to the “Good Old Rebel” after his move to Baltimore, the friendship between these Confederate expatriates likely influenced this detail of the poem.

Randolph’s move from Richmond to Baltimore, which occurred in late 1868 or early 1869, emerges from these sources as a geographical mirror to the ideological transformations experienced by ex-Confederates in the postbellum period. While the use of dialect places the “Good Old Rebel” within the imagined poor, white demographic that Randolph sought to parody, someone in the lifespan of the song tried to connect the “Good Old Rebel” to the antebellum South’s idolization of chivalry. Davis’s *Cavalcade* article makes a brief reference, without explanation, that “the piece is often called ‘The Lay of the Last Rebel.’ ”⁶⁰ This alternative title alludes to Sir Walter Scott’s poem, “The Lay of the Last Minstrel,” which, according to Scott, chronicled “the customs and manners which anciently prevailed on the borders of England and Scotland. The inhabitants living in a state partly pastoral and partly warlike, and combining habits of constant depredation with the influence of a rude spirit of

⁵⁹ Ibid., 138-139.

⁶⁰ Davis, “Elegant Old Rebel,” *Virginia Cavalcade*, 42. A reference to the poem under this title is found in *Catalogue of the Confederate Museum* (Richmond, Virginia: I. N. Jones Print., 1898), 94. Oddly, the catalogue lists this copy as belonging to the “Georgia Room” at the Confederate Museum in Richmond, Virginia.

chivalry.”⁶¹ Written more than fifty years before the start of the U. S. Civil War, Scott’s explanation of his poem could very well describe the culture of the antebellum South, or at least its romanticized version.

The antebellum South’s obsession with Scott stands well documented but warrants mentioning again here. Mark Twain felt that the “Sir Walter disease” and its veneration of caste, nobility, and title held an equal footing with slavery for the cause of the Civil War. Twain went so far as to state this connection, in the now famous lines, “Sir Walter had so large a hand in making Southern character, as it existed before the war, that he is in great measure responsible for the war.”⁶² While it remains unclear if Randolph ever referred to his poem by this title, he doubtlessly held a familiarity with the works of Scott. During his school days, his mother wrote to older brother Peyton that “The exhibition at Mr. Richards [*sic*] school came off admirably. Innes received the first premium in his division and so many compliments that I almost fear that he will be spoiled, his premium is a full copy of Scott poems.”⁶³ Speculation aside, Scott’s work holds another link to the “Good Old Rebel” beyond the alternative title. Just as antebellum southerners extracted the chivalric themes of Scott’s novels and poems from their context and refigured them to predicate the institution of slavery and the pedestaling of white femininity, the “Good Old Rebel” found new life as the sincere expression of the unreconstructed southerner’s structure of feeling, concretizing a reactionary version of white southern identity. As newly freed African Americans asserted their civil rights and ex-Confederates faced disfranchisement

⁶¹ Sir Walter Scott, *Castle Dangerous: Early Ballads and Lyrics and The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923), 144.

⁶² Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1901), 328. For more on the South’s connections to Scott, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (Oxford, New York, Toronto, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983), 22-23.

⁶³ Susan Randolph to Peyton Randolph, July 18, year unknown, Randolph Family Letters, Box 5, Folder 5.

during the short-lived reforms of Reconstruction, the “Good Old Rebel” allowed Randolph and his peers to express violent sentiments presumably reserved for a lower class.

**Changing Locations / Changing Meaning:
The “Good Old Rebel” in Georgia and Alabama**

The transition of the “Good Old Rebel” as a song and its interpretation as an anonymous expression of folk culture likely begins with the first known publication of the words, which occurred in Augusta, Georgia’s *The Daily Constitutionalist* in July of 1867. If one believes Harold Randolph’s chronology concerning his father’s authorship, then somehow these words moved from the aristocratic salons of Richmond and Baltimore to publication as a sincere sneer of recalcitrance in Georgia within a month. Whatever the time frame, this move helps to spatialize the “Good Old Rebel” as it transforms in meaning. The “Good Old Rebel” was born in the Upper South among the defeated Confederacy expatriated literati and out of Randolph’s dual intentions of expressing resentment over Confederate defeat while also parodying poor whites. However, this geographical shift to this Deep South newspaper and situated among the anonymous columns of bitterness in the *Constitutionalist* mimics the poem’s move from parodic literature to its tenure as an ostensibly authentic folk culture production. First appearing in the daily edition on July 4 and again in the weekly edition on July 10, the Augusta paper printed the words under the title “O! I’m a Good Old Rebel” and added the subtitle, “A Chant to the Wild Western Melody, ‘Joe Bowers.’ Respectfully Dedicated to Thad. Stevens.” Although the words remain close to Randolph’s, the *Constitutionalist* saw fit to somewhat censor their publication, substituting “AT ALL” in the fourth line of the first verse and “cent” in the last line of the sixth verse, both times for the rhyming “dam.” This publication bears no author and was placed on the back page in both editions, wedged among advertisements and articles concerning Reconstruction’s political debates that claimed outrage against the unjust persecution of white

southerners. On page two of the July 4, 1867 edition, a column titled “THE GLORIOUS FOURTH” leads with the statement “The following extracts will speak for themselves.” It then quotes a portion of the Constitution that outlines the election of members of Congress, as described by the “*Constitution of the United States - so-called.*” Below that, the paper’s editors pose the question, “Who made the Union?,” followed by “Answered by Thad. Stevens: ‘Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and the town of Lancaster’ Answered by the Constitution: ‘We the People of the United States.’”

Other columns from this edition evince the animosity still present in the minds of the publication’s editors. They include numerous quotations from Abraham Lincoln, William Seward, Horace Greeley and Wendell Phillips that simultaneously indict these northern leaders and opinion makers while attempting to reveal the legality of southern secession and redeem the notion of states’ rights. A mock obituary follows the quotations by these Union men under the headline “R. I. P. DIED - In Washington City, District of Columbia, on Monday, May 13th, 1867, of paralysis, COLUMBIA LIBERTY, after a severe and protracted illness of seven tedious years.”⁶⁴ With a smug gesture of disdain for the election of Radical Republicans, the *Constitutionalist* reprinted the article “The Best Government Upon the Face of the Earth, and Its Expense” from the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. This piece states, “If our Government is the best upon the face of the earth, it is probably because we pay the most for it.” Editors of the *Constitutionalist* likely found the message they desired in the article’s explanation that an expensive government “somewhat diminishes the privilege of self-government, inasmuch as no nation can long stand the expense.” White ex-Confederate readers in the Deep South relished these northern fears, feeling their former foes were receiving what they deserved for their intrusion into states’ rights. The article concludes with an implied indictment of the Republican

⁶⁴ *The Daily Constitutionalist*, July 4, 1867, 2.

congressional leadership, explaining, “We have been so well governed by our Radical friends for the last five years that we hate to speak or complain of the expense, but really it has risen to such a height as to become an unprofitable luxury much longer.”⁶⁵

Featuring numerous other articles in the vein of the ones profiled here, *The Daily Constitutionalist* functioned as an inventory of the perceived injustices of Reconstruction and an expression of the bitterness still in the mouths of the former Confederacy. Another brief article indignantly posed “A QUESTION FOR FEDERAL HEROES,” asking potential northern readers, “Did you volunteer to fight for negro equality and a violation of the Constitution, or to uphold and maintain that sacred instrument in all its parts?”⁶⁶ Ironically, the *Daily Constitutionalist* printed the words to the “Good Old Rebel,” who allegedly “hates the Constitution” on the final page of this morning edition.⁶⁷ Without explanation of its intent or author and situated among the articles detailed above, this publication gave the “Good Old Rebel” its first contextualization as a sincere evocation of white folk sentiment concerning Confederate defeat.

Based on this evidence, it stands possible that the *Constitutionalist* editors inserted the dedication to Thaddeus Stevens, as the paper is rife with derogatory articles covering the Pennsylvania Congressman’s efforts to punish the former Confederacy and to implement equality for newly freed African Americans. A Radical Republican representative from Pennsylvania before the war and an ally of abolitionist Charles Sumner, Stevens’s own words provide evidence of the impetus behind the poem’s dedication. Referring to the treatment of ex-Confederates, including Jefferson Davis, on the floor of the U. S. House of Representatives on

⁶⁵ “The Best Government Upon the Face of the Earth, and Its Expense,” *The Daily Constitutionalist*, July 4, 1867, 2.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ “Oh I’m a Good Old Rebel,” *The Daily Constitutionalist*, July 4, 1867, 4. A reprinting is found in the Augusta’s, *The Weekly Constitutionalist* July 10, 1867, 8.

July 9, 1867, only five days after the *Constitutionalist*'s first printing of the "Good Old Rebel," Stevens stated,

Jefferson Davis or any man of the army of the confederacy conquered by us, is this day liable to trial by military tribunal and to sentence. Mr. Speaker, while I would not be bloody-minded, yet if I had my way I would long ago have organized a military tribunal under military power, and I would have put Jefferson Davis and all the members of his cabinet on trial for the murders at Andersonville, the murders at Salisbury, the shooting down our prisoners of war in cold blood. Every man of them is responsible for those crimes.⁶⁸

By saddling the guilt of some of the war's most atrocious crimes with every Confederate from the executive branch on down, Stevens, in a passage typical of his attitude towards the South, leaves little room to wonder about the paper's facetious dedication of this violent musical tirade to him.

With an argument that resonates even within the contemporary political landscape, the white unreconstructed South claimed that their constituency suffered under attack from unsympathetic outsiders like Stevens and believed their race and region stood in need of defense. In the rush to combat the perceived oppression of Stevens and other Radical Republicans, ex-Confederates and their sympathizers organized an array of commemorative societies bent on defending the Confederate cause from would-be detractors. Gaines M. Foster chronicles in detail the in-fighting and competing visions of these organizations during the first twenty years after Appomattox. The efforts of these organizations, eventually culminating in the myth of the Lost Cause, yielded a legacy of monuments, memorial events, political activism, and reams of

⁶⁸ *The Selected Papers of Thaddeus Stevens: Volume 2, April 1864-August 1868*, ed. Beverly Wilson Palmer and Holly Byers Ochoa (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), 317-318.

publications. Two of the earliest and most influential organizations of the 1870s, the Southern Historical Society (SHS) and the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia (AANV), exemplify the conflict among veterans at the time. The New Orleans-born SHS believed in providing what it deemed accurate and objective historical accounts of battles and the southern men who fought them through publications as means to defining what Foster calls the “Confederate tradition.” In slight contrast, the AANV stood less concerned with accuracy and more devoted to a Virginia-centric narrative of the war through monument construction, mostly in honor of Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee. The two visions merged in 1874, and the SHS took precedence in defining the message of Confederate memory at that time.⁶⁹ Under the leadership of moderate Virginians, the SHS distanced the nascent Confederate legacy from the influence of the recalcitrant veterans like Jubal Early, the “prototypical unreconstructed Rebel,” in favor of a reconciliationist tone that the election compromise of 1877 mirrored in the political arena.⁷⁰

To help spread their version of Civil War memory, which sought to balance New South themes of reconciliation and admiration for the Confederate effort, the Louisville arm of the SHS founded *The Southern Bivouac* in 1882. Although it ceased publication in 1887, Foster notes that the *Bivouac* “enunciated themes becoming important in the Confederate tradition: an emphasis on the experience of battle, approval of the New South, and apprehension about organized labor.”⁷¹ Despite an agenda that downplayed lingering sectional hostilities, the August 1885 edition of the *Bivouac* included a reprinting of the words to the “Good Old Rebel” without an author credit and under yet another title, “Unreconstructed.” The editors explained the inclusion of this poem with a decidedly New South tone in an introductory caveat, stating, “The following

⁶⁹ Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 47-62.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

is a song that had a great run in the reconstruction period. It is doubtless a fair sample of ‘rebel’ feeling then, but no one must make the mistake of supposing it to be an exposition of Southern sentiment now. We want it understood that we are as anxious to have our share of the ‘Old Flag’ as of the appropriations.”⁷² Importantly, the *Bivouac* editors stood cognizant of the shifting perceptions of the Confederate cause at the time of their publication, including the “Good Old Rebel” as an exception to the allegedly objective wartime experiences that comprised the bulk of their short-lived journal. While the words remain identical to those of Randolph’s version, the editors obviously sought to distance themselves from its sentiment, opting to date its message as accurate only for the southern past and not its present or future

Only five years later, the “Good Old Rebel” was reclaimed, stripped of any New South apologies, as a genuine expression of ex-Confederate attitudes in the 1890 compilation *Southern War Songs: Camp-fire, Patriotic, and Sentimental* edited by W. L. Fagan. In his preface, composed from Havana, Alabama, on December 1, 1889, Fagan stated that these “war songs of the South are a part of the history of the Lost Cause. They are necessary to the impartial historian in forming a correct estimate of the animus of the Southern people.” He continued, claiming, “emotional literature is always a correct exponent of public sentiment, and these songs index the passionate sincerity of the South at the time they were written,” and asserting that his volume stood as “the largest and only collection of Confederate songs published.”⁷³ The fact that he deemed the chronicling of southern sentiment “necessary to the impartial historian” implies that other authors had spread what he deemed as false histories concerning the

⁷² Basil W. Duke and R. W. Knott, ed., *The Southern Bivouac: A Monthly Literary and Historical Magazine, Vol. 4, 1885-1886* (Louisville, Kentucky: Southern Historical Association of Louisville, 1887), 190.

⁷³ W. L. Fagan, coll. and arr., *Southern War Songs: Camp-fire, Patriotic, and Sentimental*, (New York: M. T. Richardson and Company, 1890), iii. This same quote appears in McWhirter, *Battle Hymns*, 195. McWhirter stops short of interpreting what Fagan’s attitude might imply for the collective memory of the war. Furthermore, he states that the date of publication for *Southern War Songs* is 1900 instead of 1890.

Confederacy. Writing from Hale County, Alabama, later to find notoriety as the setting of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, the South that Fagan imagined was the idealized prewar South and a static social and racial hierarchy that again stood in need of defense. Without the sort of New South caveat offered in Louisville's *Bivouac*, Fagan fired a volley for the Deep South in the battle of collective memory production by compiling these songs, seeing to their publication, and securing a script for the performance of unreconstructed southern identity.

In his volume, Fagan reprints the title as "I'm a Good Old Rebel" and lists the author as "J. R. T.," an identity that remains unknown. He also states, "The music of this song can be obtained of the Oliver Ditson Co., Boston, Mass." but offers no date of original publication.⁷⁴ One cannot know if the "Joe Bowers" melody suggested in the *Daily Constitutionalist* is present in this version as well, but the lyrics remain essentially the same. In fact, any differences appear unremarkable in light of the most striking addition to this printing. Here, Fagan includes the depiction of an African American man between the third and fourth verses, as if rendered in mid-verse of the song, with the caption "I'm a good old rebel" printed underneath. Seated in a straight back chair with a cane-woven seat, the man holds a pipe in his left hand, his right is made into a fist, and he leans forward.⁷⁵ While it remains unclear whether the African American portrait originated with Fagan's publication or not, its inclusion leads the reader to believe that a black man endorsed, without irony, the recalcitrant rebel sentiment. This illustration also effectively positions the words as African American dialect rather than that of poor whites and contains enormous implications in regard to the fabrication of collective memory. Casting an African American male in the role of the unreconstructed rebel who "hates the Freedman's Buro," validates the obstinate attitude of unreconstructed white southerners and further portrays

⁷⁴ An examination of *A Catalog of Piano Music, Complete to January 1, 1915* (Boston, New York, Chicago: Oliver Ditson Company, 1915) failed to list "O I'm a Good Old Rebel" as a title for sale.

⁷⁵ Fagan, *Southern War Songs*, 361. See Figure 1.

the outcome of the Civil War as a wrong to be righted in the arena of public opinion, if not resumed on the field of battle.

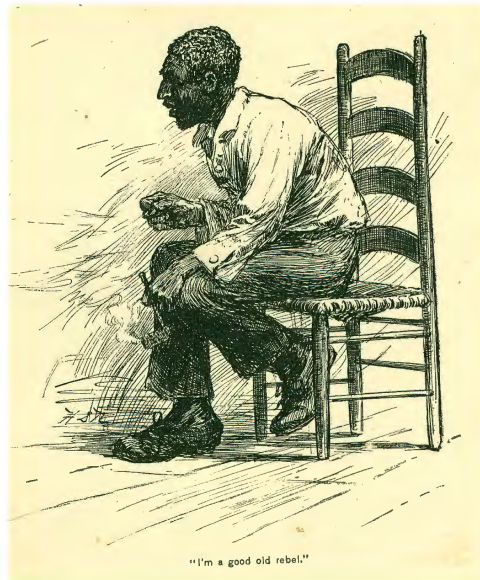


Figure 1: Fagan's African American rebel.

These scant publications hardly represent a widespread presence within white southern popular culture, and the “Good Old Rebel” never enjoyed popularity in print like the more common Confederate songs “Dixie” and “The Bonnie Blue Flag.” However, passing judgment on this song’s influence based exclusively on the printed publications belies its pervasive influence and powerful definition of the postwar, unreconstructed structure of feeling. The liner notes from the 1976 release *Songs of the Civil War* on New World Records provide a clue into the dissemination of this tune and its perpetuation through the first 50 years after the war. As the author of the liner notes, Charles Hamm, states, “a number of mysteries surround the present song. *American War Songs* claims that it was entered for copyright by A. C. Blackmar in Louisiana in 1864, yet the words were clearly written after the war.”⁷⁶

⁷⁶ The Harmonieion Singers, *Songs of the Civil War*, New World Records 80202, 1976, 33 1/3 rpm, liner notes.

Hamm, likely aware of Fagan's edition, writes, "the earliest edition gives 'J.R.T.' as the author, yet most historians of song agree that the tune was known as 'Joe Bowers' and was by R. Bishop Buckley of Buckley's Minstrels." According to Hamm, Adalbert Volck, a Confederate political cartoonist and caricaturist, or Innes Randolph stood as potential authors of the lyrics, and he noted "this text was probably too extreme to be widely circulated in a printed version, even in the postwar South," speculating that "its chief popularity was as a song passed on by ear through several generations." He continues by placing the "Good Old Rebel" in the repertoire of minstrel shows, such as the ones performed by Buckley.⁷⁷ Without adequate documentation, Hamm's assertions strike of conjecture based on his work as an accomplished musicologist focused on minstrelsy and the production of sheet music but not on any intensive investigation of the song's roots.

Three years later, Hamm included "O I'm a Good Old Rebel" in a footnote to his discussion of Civil War era sheet music productions that appropriated folk tunes, if not words, like "The Girl I Left Behind," "The Wearing of the Grey!," and "The Bonnie Blue Flag."⁷⁸ To this end he stated, "Though such oral-tradition tunes were sometimes fitted with new words and printed as sheet music in the North, the practice was much more widespread in the South." Somewhat problematically, Hamm goes on to explain this occurrence by way of conflating culture and biology, stating that southerners displayed this proclivity "because a higher percentage of the population was descended from English-Irish-Scottish immigrants, and had maintained closer ties with the folk culture brought by these people to America." Here, Hamm insists the "Good Old Rebel" and its pairing with the tune "Joe Bowers" stands with "Where Are

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979), 248-250.

You Going, Abe Lincoln,” “The Southern Soldier Boy,” and “Riding a Raid” as examples of new words set to older traditional melodies.⁷⁹

Sheet Music and Imagining the Unreconstructed South

These sources reiterate the suggestion that the enduring appeal of the “Good Old Rebel” found transmission through oral tradition, public performance, and limited publication. Part of this appeal may stem from its willingness to create and express an unreconstructed structure of feeling that other songs dared not approach. Christian McWhirter details the importance of songs to veterans’ reunions that proliferated in the late nineteenth century and the trouble with espousing wartime themes in a postwar setting. He notes that by the early twentieth century “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” supplanted its more vitriolic forbearer, “John Brown’s Body,” asserting that “with Jim Crow firmly established in the South and endorsed by the federal government, the original lyrics’ more overt references to John Brown were likely as disturbing to many early twentieth-century northerners as they had been for wartime Democrats.” Similarly, Confederates struggled with wartime songs that “potentially challenged Lost Cause dogma,” finally settling on “Dixie” as the anthem of the romanticized vision of the defeated Confederacy.⁸⁰ As the “Good Old Rebel” lingered among public performances and veterans’ reunions, its message reminded veterans and citizens of the former Confederacy of the structure of feeling that thrived in the immediate aftermath of defeat and attitudes that had gradually given way to trends of reunion and fraternity. Thanks to its propagation as a song in these venues, the “Good Old Rebel” deserves consideration as a site of memory that aided in the creation of a seemingly unalterable, unreconstructed structure of feeling for the next generation of white southerners and their sympathizers.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 250.

⁸⁰ McWhirter, *Battle Hymns*, 191, 196.

The bitterness expressed in the “Good Old Rebel” ran contrary to themes of sacrifice, valor, and eventually, reconciliation that quickly found expression after Appomattox, as war-weary citizens sought to silence sectional hostilities. A song published in 1865 by the Horace Waters Company, located in New York City, called “Dixie Doodle” detailed how “Uncle Sam, with Gen’ral Grant, and Yankee Doodle Dandy / Sought and found a wayward boy / Twas Dixie Doodle Dandy / Secession proved too rough a track / For Dixie Doodle Dandy / So Grant and Sherman led him back / To live with Sam and Andy.”⁸¹ Here, these words depicted the Confederacy like a prodigal son gone astray, and the forgiving father, found in the Union, welcomed his wrongheaded progeny back into the fold. In a grasp for reunion that perhaps sounded more insulting than welcoming to southern listeners, this tune characterized the South as a derivation of the United States or “Yankee Doodle Dandy,” far from the sovereign identity and constructed nationalism the Confederacy had hoped to attain and strained to portray in their own popular songs.

In 1876, as Redeemer Democrats were busy securing the political defeat of Reconstruction and the Republican Party in the South, the music publishing giant Oliver Ditson and Company of Boston published the song “A Knot of Blue and Gray.”⁸² The narrative stems from the point of view of a sister in mourning, who still wears a scarf of blue and a scarf of gray tied in a knot to commemorate her two fallen brothers, one a Union soldier and the other a Confederate. Validating the causes of both sides, the sister states, “Each fought for what he deemed right / And fell with sword in hand / One sleeps amid Virginia’s hills / And one by

⁸¹ Wm. H. Stevens, “Dixie Doodle” (New York: Horace Waters, 1865), Historic American Sheet Music Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University, accessed March 1, 2012, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/hasm_a3691/.

⁸² For more on the political defeat of Reconstruction, see Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988); Woodward, *Origins of the New South*.

Georgia's strand / The same sun shines on both their graves / And rests o'er hills and plain / And in my dreams of vanished days / Both brothers live again."⁸³ This sentimental portrayal highlighted the valor of each side of the war, keeping the memory of white sacrifice alive regardless of the cause for which they fought and neglecting themes of African American freedom or even existence.

The jingoistic nationalism spawned by the Spanish-American War further submerged the memory of what caused the Civil War, as imperialism thrust white northerners and southerners into a war with a foreign foe. Popular song echoed these feelings and still called on the Civil War as a touchstone for sentimental song fodder. The song "The Blue and the Gray. Or, A Mother's Gift To Her Country," published in 1900, detailed the mournful tale of a mother who lost three sons in the two most recent American wars. The chorus stated, "One lies down in Appomattox / Many miles away / Another sleeps at Chickamauga / And they both wore suits of gray / Mid strains of 'Down in Dixie' / The third was laid away / In a trench at Santiago / The Blue and the Gray." In the second verse, the mother dreams of death so that she might reach eternity, where her sons "watch at the heav'nly gates on guard beside their guns / The mother true, to the gray and blue / May enter with her sons."⁸⁴ The reasons for her sons' deaths fail to register in this mother's estimation, so long as she remains "true" to the memory of their martial service. The sentiment expressed in this song assuaged the painful memories of death in the Civil War and the Spanish-American War, while giving mourners a sense of moral continuity, as all these deaths were classifiable as valorous in terms of sacrifice for sacrifice's sake.

⁸³ T. Brigham Bishop, "A Knot of Blue and Gray: As Sung By Mr. William Hamilton of the San Francisco Minstrels" (Boston: Oliver Ditson and Company, 1876), Johns Hopkins University, Levy Sheet Music Collection, Box 014, Item 042, accessed March 5, 2012, <http://jhir.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/9929>.

⁸⁴ Paul Dresser, "The Blue and the Gray. Or, A Mother's Gift to Her Country" (New York: Howley, Haviland, and Company, 1900), Johns Hopkins University, Levy Sheet Music Collection, Box 145, Item 090, accessed March 5, 2012, <http://jhir.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/17494>.

Three years after the end of the Spanish-American War, the subject of southern participation in the U. S. military still lingered in popular songs like, “He Laid Away a Suit of Gray, to Wear the Union Blue.” The first verse tells of a southern boy who played soldier as a child while wearing his father’s Confederate uniform, “But when the Union called to arms to fight a foreign foe, / The uniform of gray he laid away.” Verse two strikes a mournful tone. When the young man dies in battle, “A far from dear old Dixie and the mother that he loved, / They laid him in a rude grave all alone, / And o’er his head in mem’ry there a comrade from the North, / These words cut roughly on a slab of stone.” The chorus revealed the epitaph and further established the South’s loyalty to the national cause, relaying, “He said we’ll show that Dixie’s sons, will to the flag prove true; / His father’s sword he girded on resolved to dare and do, / So he laid away a suit of gray to wear the Union blue.”⁸⁵ Although the Spanish-American War went unnamed in this piece, the date of its publication left little wonder about the identity of the “foreign foe.” Furthermore, the anonymity of the enemy may indicate that the author foresaw this sentiment as a sustainable selling point in perpetuity, and its sentimental themes of mother and death likely appealed to the prescribed emotional gamut of Victorian era southern women. This attitude of reunion served the multifaceted functions of conflating whiteness with U. S. national identity, easing the lingering tensions of sectional strife, and erasing the struggle for African American freedom from the national consciousness, all in two verses and a chorus.

By 1909, the reconciliationist attitude was in full swing with songs like “There Is’nt [*sic*] Any North and South: A New National Song.” This song boasts the optimistic chorus, “There isn’t any North and South / Just one big U. S. A. / There isn’t any Dixon line / It has all been swept away / There isn’t any reason why we’re not the peer on land and sea / Since the Blue and

⁸⁵ Edward M. Wickers, “He Laid Away a Suit of Gray, to Wear the Union Blue” (New York: Feist and Frankenthaler, 1901), author’s collection.

Gray are good friends now / We're just as proud as we can be." Interestingly, the Southern Music Company of Memphis, Tennessee published this tune, placing progenitors of this reconciliatory feeling in the Deep South and the hometown of Nathan Bedford Forrest, himself an emblematic, unreconstructed southerner. The sheet music features a cover photograph of Confederate General Clement D. Evans and United States Army General Fred D. Grant, son of U. S. Grant, shaking hands and smiling at a Confederate reunion in Memphis, dated June 10, 1909.⁸⁶

These songs of sectional reunion match nicely with the sentimental and patriotic ballads that found popularity with middle class audiences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While the majority of this music originated in New York's Tin Pan Alley, traveling stage shows delivered mass-produced, commercial music to audiences, including those in the South. These shows functioned as promotional tours for certain songs, ensuring their popularity and, by extension, profitable sales of their sheet music notation. Sentimental ballads, which included songs of motherhood and saccharine romance, constituted one of the most popular Victorian song genres. This music industry held an especially powerful influence on the white middle class South as the sentimental ballads' "celebration of domesticity . . . helped publishers appeal to young upper- and middle-class women, the target consumers of sheet music."⁸⁷ Arthur Loesser claims these "parlor pieces" dominated the sheet music market and that sales of classical music could never "equal the quantity, distribution, and frequency of vocal music, especially of songs for a single voice with piano accompaniment." In the years of 1895 to 1914, "informal home gatherings of adolescents were most likely to cluster around the piano. Usually it was a

⁸⁶ L. Z. Phillips, "There Is'nt Any North and South: A New National Song" (Memphis, Tennessee: Southern Music Company, 1909), Archives and Special Collections, University of Mississippi.

⁸⁷ Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 37.

girl who played; but both girls and boys sang lustily.”⁸⁸ Like teenagers drawn to the sonic hypnosis of the record player, the radio, MTV, or an iTunes playlist, the young men and women of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries swarmed to the piano to hear the latest rag, coon song, or ballad circulating through middle-class parlors.

Indeed, sheet music production boomed in the final decades of the nineteenth century, as Victorian American culture, obsessed with printing books, manuals, and pamphlets, sought all available outlets for moral inculcation before the advent of widely available recorded music. Census numbers indicate the degree to which this industry boomed. Whereas sheet music failed to even warrant its own census category separate from “Musical Instruments and Materials” in 1880, the 1890 census lists its production separate from instruments and within the “Paper Industry” section.⁸⁹ Eight years before the Spanish-American War, the U. S. government recorded seventy-nine establishments in the business of producing sheet music and music books. These businesses combined valued at \$1,816,205 before subtraction for overhead costs such as payment for materials and workers’ wages. By 1900, the sheet music business had grown to \$2,313,966 in total capital value, with eighty-seven establishments participating in its production.⁹⁰

Pertinent to discussions of the “Good Old Rebel,” the sheet music for the song infiltrated the Victorian American home, potentially articulating a new structure of feeling for the next generation of white southerners who never fought for the Confederacy. The only available sheet music for the song, bearing the title, “O I’m a Good Old Rebel: A Chaunt to the Wild Western

⁸⁸ Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women, and Pianos: A Social History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 545, 548.

⁸⁹ U. S. Census Bureau, “Statistics of Manufacturers: General Statistics for Each Specified Category, Etc.: 1880,” Table III, accessed November 27, 2012, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1880a_v2-09.pdf; U. S. Census Bureau, “Summary by Classes of Printing and Publishing, 1890,” Table 1, accessed November 27, 2012, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1890a_v6p3-06.pdf.

⁹⁰ U. S. Census Bureau, “Report on Manufacturing Industries in the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1900,” Forest Industries, accessed November 27, 2012, <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/05457254v9ch8.pdf>.

Melody, 'Joe Bowers' " and subtitled "RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO THE HON. THAD. STEVENS," likely appeared during the aforementioned publication explosion. Of interest to debates of authorship, the second page of this publication displays the letters R and I entwined in place of the author's name, an obvious reference to Randolph in retrospect but a fact that likely eluded most consumers of that era. Although the words remain the same, the accompanying illustration on the music's coversheet offers another ample text open for examination. This artwork features a bearded man in civilian clothes, whose only visible possessions fit into a tattered haversack next to him on the ground, as he sits on the trunk of a fallen tree, presumably taking a rest from a journey. Beside him protrudes an axe, buried within the trunk of the tree on which he sits, and the look on his face denotes a feeling of dissatisfaction and contemplation.

From the man's young appearance and the theme of the lyrics, the buyer of this music must have presumed that this character is the good old rebel, a veteran of the Civil War, possibly on his way home from Appomattox or some other point of surrender. A cabin sits in the distance, positioned in the top right of the illustration as symbol of the character's humble class status and dissociating the song with romantic images of an aristocratic South of white fields and white mansions.⁹¹ Although the title suggests a date of publication close to the 1867 *Constitutionalist* printing, the axe functions as a symbolic prop, "buried" to represent the themes of reconciliation and reunion that ameliorated sectional tensions and possibly placing the publication closer to the turn of the twentieth century when those feelings reached their peak. Regardless of any chance at reconciliation, he remains a rebel who refuses the tenets of Reconstruction, and his discontented visage speaks of his anger over the South's position at the end of the war.

⁹¹ "O I'm a Good Old Rebel. A Chaunt to the Wild Western Melody, 'Joe Bowers,' " n. d., Johns Hopkins University, Levy Sheet Music Collection, Box 093, Item 168, accessed March 7, 2012, <http://jhir.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/12152>. See Figure 2.



Figure 2: "Good Old Rebel" sheet music.

One may even suggest that the image of this Confederate veteran offers a proto-version of the iconic hillbilly, with his long beard, floppy felt hat, haversack, and obstinacy in the face of authority, especially the Federal kind. The font also creates an interesting context, as its design features mossy sticks arranged to form the letters of the title. One can easily imagine such lettering on hillbilly-themed popular culture venues from Dogpatch, U. S. A. to early Cracker Barrel menus, conveying a homemade, making-do-with-little ethos to the chagrin of folks, presumably Yankees and urbanites, who rely on the government for goods and services. If considered as a parody of poor white sentiment, as Randolph likely intended, one could view the illustration as an unflattering cartoon rendering, like an ancestor of Snuffy Smith. However, for those seeking a genuine unreconstructed white southerner, this image, combined with the vehemently hateful lyrics, helped create a version of white identity that essentialized the bitter feelings of defeat for those willing to perceive that message. Even music theory lends insight

into the tone of the piece, as the musical notation places the song in the key of C minor, adding a dramatic, foreboding aural tone to the already threatening lyrics. Through its words and images, this piece of music and the unreconstructed structure of feeling it portrays presented a bid for the collective memory of its listeners, creating an alternate narrative to the predominantly sweet themes of reunion following the end of Reconstruction.

Although the date of publication remains absent from this printing, the importance of the place in time recedes in comparison to the physical space this music occupied. Victorian sheet music consumers bought these pieces with the intent of playing them on their parlor pianos, often thanks to the skill of a female in the family. Just as songs of reunion delivered messages of fraternity and interregional harmony, the “Good Old Rebel” sheet music offered a vehicle for the song’s message of hateful rebellion, invading domestic spaces and providing consumers with an image of recalcitrant southern whiteness. The printing of the “Good Old Rebel” words, music, and image together in one package achieves the effect of canonization, as this brand of southern whiteness takes its place in the archive, creating a potential time capsule of hatred for those willing to ignore its attempt at parody and internalize its message with sincerity. In short, the Lost Cause and its emphasis on valor and romance vanish in the “Good Old Rebel,” its presentation of the Same Cause, and readiness to resume the fight. The following chapter discusses how another form of canonization perpetuated the existence of the “Good Old Rebel,” when the song made its way into the annals of academic folklore in the twentieth century.

2. COLLECTING FOLKLORE AND MAKING MEMORY:

THE “GOOD OLD REBEL” IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Locating the “Good Old Rebel” in the twentieth century requires an exploration of folklore trends and the commercialization of the Confederate legacy. The “Good Old Rebel” resided in both of these venues, a fact that speaks to the malleability of its message. Thanks to its use of dialect, underground popularity, and lack of a clear author in the nineteenth century, folklorists often recorded the “Good Old Rebel” for academic compilations. Many times the performers from whom the folklorists collected, and often even the folklorists themselves, imagined the song as an anonymous folk creation. The song’s presence in this archive emblemizes the slippery debates about what constituted authentic folksongs that permeated academia in the early twentieth century. This study also traces the life of the song as a symbol and tool for the commercialization of Civil War memory, investigating the advertising of Rebel Yell Whiskey and the 1957 film *Run of the Arrow* as sites of memory production. In doing so, this chapter demonstrates how the song survived in the twentieth century, finding acceptance by later generations that never directly experienced the war or defeat. Understanding this song’s journey allows an intensive look at the creation of Civil War memory and the survival of the Same Cause ideology.

Calculating the impact of the “Good Old Rebel” on collective memory requires broadening the conventional understanding of where memory resides. Just as the wartime

generation reacted against modernity through the creation of memorial landscapes, they also, in conjunction with their immediate descendants, pursued their legacy through the documentation of Confederate culture. Within this movement, dozens of Confederate poetry and song compilations entered the market place, including the likes of W. L. Fagan's profiled in the preceding chapter. One such publication from 1903, titled *Cullings From the Confederacy*, served the dual functions of documenting Confederate verse and praising the efforts of Nora Fontaine M. Davidson's toil on behalf of the southern war effort. An apparent adherent to the Same Cause ideology, the introduction to this volume recognized Davidson, who ran a girls' school in Petersburg, Virginia during the war, as an "unreconstructed rebel," who continually "gave concerts and entertainments, patriotic and otherwise, for the help of the Confederate cause. Even after the town was under martial law."⁹²

Almost all of the selections for this volume echo Davidson's unreconstructed nature, intoning praises to the Confederacy found in the likes of "Farewell Forever to the Star Spangled Banner" and "The Right Above the Wrong." Davidson even gave voice to the agency of Confederate women in her collection with poems and narrative excerpts titled "A Brave Girl's Fate," "Female Heroism," "Witty Southern Girl," "She Saved Her Bacon," and "Female Soldiers."⁹³ Appropriately, Davidson included the "Good Old Rebel" to express her unreconstructed disposition. This set of lyrics match the *Constitutionalist* version from 1867, complete with censured vulgarities and dedication to Stevens. However, Davidson's publication added the year 1862 and included the credits, "Sung by Harry Allen, Washington Artillery, New

⁹² Nora Fontaine M. Davidson, comp., *Cullings From the Confederacy: A Collection of Southern Poems, Original and Others, Popular During the War Between the States, and Incidents and Facts Worth Recalling, 1862 - 1866, Including the Doggerel of the Camp, As Well As a Tender Tribute to the Dead* (Washington, D. C.: The Rufus H. Darby Printing Company, 1903), 19, Google e-book.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 28, 114, 104, 44, 59, 115, 91.

Orleans, La.”⁹⁴ The reference to the Freedmen’s Bureau and the song’s attitude of defeat make the 1862 date impossible. Furthermore, while the reference to Harry Allen appears as an assertion of his performance, his association with the song only led to confusion about its origins and caused others to attribute authorship to Allen, when it found publication in similar compilations.⁹⁵

Coinciding with the efforts of this postwar generation to document the Confederacy through its literary legacy, an academic interest in folklore spurred the compilation of songs and other verse with an interest in documenting the presence of older and allegedly more authentic cultures. Karl Hagstrom Miller notes the creation of this folkloric paradigm within academia that formalized with the creation of the American Folklore Society in 1888 and rightly links this trend to the racialization of musical genres and bodies. This paradigm posited that pure folk cultures only existed in the isolated removes of the colonialized world. As academics from the disciplines of anthropology and literature sought to catalogue and annotate folk music and its perceived authenticity, they increasingly looked to the South for these allegedly untainted and intact folk cultures. Northeastern academics, schooled in the folkloric paradigm, presumed the South’s relative commercial and cultural isolation made it a repository of authentic songs and folkways untouched by the disconcerting forces of modernity, like a stateside enclave of the developing world. Based on this paradigm, white southerners presumably possessed inherent ties to the songs of the British Isles, a premise that sent ballad collectors on trips to the

⁹⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁹⁵ For another example of Allen’s association, see Esther Parker Ellinger, *The Southern War Poetry of the Civil War* (Hershey, Pennsylvania: The Hershey Press, 1918), 134. This publication served as Ellinger’s doctoral thesis, completed at the University of Pennsylvania under the direction of Edgar Allan Poe scholar, Arthur Hobson Quinn.

Appalachian South and beyond in search of undiscovered and un-commercialized artists and songs.⁹⁶

A similar sense of urgency motivated the documentation of folk cultures and the Confederate legacy, with both movements reacting to the concerns of modernity in the first decades of the twentieth century. With this in mind, Miller's study helps to contextualize the interest in white southern cultures in general and the appearance of the "Good Old Rebel" in folklore collections in particular. Miller specifically indicts John A. Lomax in his idealization of isolated folk songs as opposed to the conventionally or commercially produced popular songs found in sheet music.⁹⁷ Importantly, folk and Confederate songs crossed paths in 1910 when Lomax published *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. To fill his vision of an untainted culture, Lomax romanticized the cow-camp that proliferated in the 1870s and 1880s as a model of egalitarianism that welcomed black, white, rich, and poor. His rose-colored vision considered all of these men as "bold young spirits who emigrated to the West for the same reason their ancestors had come across the seas. They loved roving; they loved freedom; they were pioneers by instinct." Since cowboys represented the last semblance of the pioneer spirit in the vanishing West, Lomax felt the need to commit their songs and ballads to publication to enshrine the last authentic connection to that way of life. This devotion to authenticity permeates Lomax's words as he relays that "these songs, coming direct from the cowboy's experience, giving vent to his careless and tender emotions, will afford future generations a truer conception of what he really was than is now possessed by those who know him only through highly colored romance." While he stresses that he compiled the words of some of the songs from different versions,

⁹⁶ Miller, *Segregating Sound*, 2-3, 102-104, 241-243. Of interest to the roots of this paradigm, see William Goodell Frost, "Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains," reprinted for *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1899, Google e-book.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 85-87.

Lomax insists that the songs remain “arranged in some such haphazard way as they were collected, - jotted down on a table in the rear of saloons, scrawled on an envelope while squatting about a campfire, caught behind the scenes of a broncho-busting outfit.”⁹⁸

Lomax included the “Good Old Rebel” among the other ostensibly authentic folk productions, albeit with a version that holds striking variation on the lyrical content. The perspective of a Confederate veteran certainly remained, but gone are the references to the Freedmen’s Bureau and the desire to resume the fight. Instead, the “Good Old Rebel” of the West seeks refuge from defeat in Mexico. Below are the lyrics to this version as they appear in Lomax’s collection.

OH, I’m a good old rebel, that’s what I am;
And for this land of freedom, I don’t care a damn,
I’m glad I fought agin her, I only wish we’d won,
And I don’t want no pardon for anything I’ve done.

I served with old Bob Lee, three years about,
Got wounded in four places and starved at Point Lookout;
I caught the rheumatism a-campin’ in the snow,
But I killed a *chance* of Yankees and wish I’d killed some mo’.

For I’m a good old rebel, etc.

I hate the constitooshin, this great republic too;
I hate the mouty eagle, an’ the uniform of blue;
I hate their glorious banner an’ all their flags an’ fuss,
Those lyin’, thievin’ Yankees, I hate’em wuss and wuss.

For I’m a good old rebel, etc.

I won’t be reconstructed! I’m better now than them;
And for a carpetbagger, I don’t give a damn;
So I’m off for the frontier, soon as I can go,
I’ll prepare me a weapon and start for Mexico.

For I’m a good old rebel, etc.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ John A. Lomax, comp., *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* (New York: Sturgis and Walton, 1910), xxi, xxii, xxiii-xxiv.

Here, the “Good Old Rebel” refuses a subjugated place in the postwar U. S., preferring to fend for himself in a foreign land rather than associate with Yankees and carpetbaggers.

Although Lomax failed to provide an exact date of his collection of the song, this version’s wish to “start for Mexico” reflected the desires of many ex-Confederates after Appomattox. Foster noted that the most financially capable of the former Confederates often fled to Mexico before exiling to points in Europe or Canada to wait out the retribution for rebellion.¹⁰⁰ Even members of Innes Randolph’s family considered seeking refuge across the border. Only four months after the Confederate defeat, his mother, Susan, described her happiness “that Peyton has relinquished the idea of going to Mexico. I thought something would turn up to prevent it and I am sure he would not be much longer without employment.”¹⁰¹ The existence of the “Good Old Rebel” in the West and its lyrical reconfiguration to suit this new geography evinces the creative intersection between place and culture. In the minds of the cowboys that Lomax encountered, the “Good Old Rebel” spoke for a formidable, yet partially fulfilled desire to escape from the constraints of society that deferred their vision for freedom. The West and the cowboy singer, like the imaginary South and unreconstructed southerner that the song constructs, functions as a place where the song’s message of individualism and rebellion could find purchase, free from the consequences of social, political, or legal expectations.

Only a year after the publication of *Cowboy Songs*, Wallace and Frances Rice published a multi-author compilation titled *The Humbler Poets*, consisting of verse drawn from periodicals from 1885 to 1910 that included Randolph’s poem under the title “Unreconstructed.” While the Rices failed to state in which periodical they uncovered Randolph’s poem, the title harkens back

⁹⁹ Ibid., 94-95.

¹⁰⁰ Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 15-17.

¹⁰¹ Susan Randolph to unknown, August 20, 1865, Randolph Family Papers, Box 5, Folder 7.

to the 1885 *Southern Bivouac*. Unlike the *Bivouac*, however, the Rices' version credits Randolph with authorship and adds a comment on the humorous tone intended in the original, adding the annotation, "For the benefit of those whose sense of humor goes into eclipse when serious matters are treated lightly, it is to be observed that this stirring ballad was written by one of the younger generation in Virginia to satirize the attitude of certain of his elders." While the Rices interpreted Randolph's intentions correctly, they failed to provide evidence that a generational divide provided the motivation and miss the class-based parody that the present study suggests. Notably, the words remained nearly identical to Randolph's with a few slight differences in the dialect spellings of words and the omission of the lines that announced the narrators hate of the Constitution and the Freedmen's Bureau.¹⁰²

In her 1921 work *Poetic Origins and the Ballad*, Louise Pound, an English professor at the University of Nebraska and president of the American Folklore Society from 1925-1927, took Lomax to task for his inclusion of the "Good Old Rebel" in *Cowboy Songs*, citing the Rice publication, as well as the Harold Randolph edited *Poems* from 1898. Pound documented the true origins of the "Good Old Rebel," along with several other selections from *Cowboy Songs*, in order to prove "that the bulk of Mr. Lomax's are not of cowboy composition but immigrated among the cowboys."¹⁰³ Fifteen years later, Lomax, along with his son Alan, corrected their mistaken identification of the "Good Old Rebel" as an "authentic" folk song with the publication of their *American Ballads and Folk Songs*. The father and son song collectors offered a brief explanation

¹⁰² Wallace and Frances Rice, eds., *The Humbler Poets (Second Series): A Collection of Newspaper and Periodical Verse, 1885 to 1910* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1911), 322-323, Google e-book.

¹⁰³ Louise Pound, *Poetic Origins and the Ballad* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 228-229, 226. For more on Pound, see Rosemary Levy Zumwalt, *American Folklore Scholarship: A Dialogue of Dissent* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 64-65. For more on Randolph's authorship and a brief bibliographic account of the song, see John Harrington Cox, ed., *Folk-Songs of the South: Collected Under the Auspices of the West Virginia Folk-Lore Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), 281-282. Here, Cox reprints the words, which match Randolph's version in *Poems*, as they were contributed to his collection by Mr. E. C. Smith of Weston, West Virginia in 1915.

of the entry for this song, titled “Good Old Rebel” for this publication, noting an inquiry into the roots of the song by *Collier’s* magazine, as well as Randolph’s authorship. They included two sets of words and music, explaining the version in *Cowboy Songs* along with its music as a “Texas composite” of a pre-existing song. The “Good Old Rebel” then disappeared from later reprints of *Cowboy Songs*.¹⁰⁴

Similar debates concerning the origins and authorship of allegedly authentic folk productions infiltrated the popular press. In this spirit, *Collier’s* magazine began running open calls for information concerning specific folk songs as a means to document the point of origin for these products of folk culture, offering a window into the impact of this song on Civil War memory in the early twentieth century. According to the April 4, 1914 edition, the magazine received a “flood of replies to an editorial request for . . . what we supposed was a real American ballad in which an unreconstructed rebel declares . . . he’d like to take his musket an’ go an’ fight some mo’.” This article, written by Iowa author Herbert Quick, defined a ballad as having “no single author” as it “springs from the homogenous dancing throng” and counts among its characteristics “the absence of the personal note, of reflection, and of conscious artistry.” Quick states with a tone of disappointment that based on the responses received from the editorial request, *Collier’s* determined the song not to be a traditional ballad as defined above, but instead, “The Good Old Rebel,” “a poem written by Major Innes Randolph, a member of General J. E. B. Stuart’s staff, and a native of Virginia.”¹⁰⁵

The article continues by noting the publication of the poem in the 1898 volume edited by Randolph’s son, but suggests the words “had long before that date gone into the songs of the people” and set to the tune of “Joe Bowers.” Quick makes no reference to the sheet music or

¹⁰⁴ John A. and Alan Lomax, comp. and coll., *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1934), 535-540.

¹⁰⁵ Herbert Quick, “A Good Old Rebel,” *Collier’s*, April 4, 1914, 20.

Fagan's publication. However, the fact he mentions the words are sung to the tune of "Joe Bowers" suggests familiarity with at least the sheet music examined above. *Collier's* included a picture of an old rebel, complete with white hair, matching mustache and goatee, as well as a cane, a bowtie, and seated in a wicker rocker.¹⁰⁶ This depiction offers yet another artistic rendering of the rebel, albeit a seemingly harmless, geriatric version that belies the violent tone of the lyrics, and situates the song's sentiment in the past as a nod to the popular themes of sectional reconciliation.



Figure 3: The *Collier's* rebel.

One *Collier's* reader, Mr. Richard N. Brooke of Washington, D. C., who believed Innes Randolph to be the author, suggested the words represented " 'a bit of fun not supposed to reflect Major Randolph's own sentiments, but to illustrate the irreconcilable spirit of the illiterate element in some sections.' " To this pronouncement, Quick astutely claims that even if Mr. Brooke stands correct, "it was too successful for mere fun." In his opinion, these words "embodied the bitterness of the reconstruction epoch - a bitterness that was created by

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. See Figure 3.

oppression.”¹⁰⁷ Quick’s estimation submits that “I’m a Good Old Rebel” tapped into one variant of the numerous perspectives held by many white Southerners and their painful collective memory of defeat in the Civil War. He also suggests a certain “oppression” caused this violent sentiment, expressing sympathy with white conservatives of the postwar South.

Alignment with this constituency of the South may stem from the political affiliations of Quick’s father during the Civil War, detailed in his 1925 autobiography *One Man’s Life*. Born in Iowa in 1861, Quick vividly relays the hardships his family faced during the conflict, claiming “If there is anything in prenatal influences . . . I surely was affected by the historic factors of the winter of 1860 and the summer of 1861.” He describes his father, “who was forty-five years of age when the war broke, and physically disqualified from service,” faced the suspicions of their neighbors and accusations of being a Copperhead thanks to his vote for Stephen A. Douglas in the 1860 election. As Quick surmises, “Any Democrat was a Copperhead in our locality, if these grocery-store soldiers were to be believed.” Tension surrounding the elder Quick’s loyalties eventually culminated with his appearance before the Council of National Defense on charges of treason over alleged criticisms of the Lincoln administration. While he was dismissed, Quick remembers hearing his father “tell of sleeping that night with an ax by his bedside, and . . . his firm resolve to use it in case of forcible invasion of his home by the mob bent on ridding the town of a Copperhead.”¹⁰⁸ Quick follows this tale with a reflection on the first white inhabitants of his home state, claiming, “Iowa was settled as a southern state by people who lived, in the thin fringes of forest along the streams the lives of woodsmen” and that Iowan politicians allied themselves with their southern counterparts in the U. S. Congress.¹⁰⁹ Although his family emigrated there from Minnesota, Quick’s juxtaposition of this information with the story of his

¹⁰⁷ Quick, “A Good Old Rebel,” *Collier’s*, 20.

¹⁰⁸ Quick, *One Man’s Life* (Indianapolis, Indiana: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1925), 63-65.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

father's politics opens the door for conjecture concerning his feelings about the past and its relationship to his present.

The myriad responses elicited by the *Collier's* inquiry and the disparate geographical locations from which they came hint at the popularity of this song and the methods of its distribution. The magazine received at least thirty responses to the request for the song's roots, including twenty-four different versions concerning where they heard it and its origin. Seven readers reported that Randolph authored the words, which the magazine interpreted as lending credence to this claim. Baltimore's Laura Lee Davidson, author of *Winter of Content* and *Isles of Eden*, stated that these words were "sung in many a Southern parlor in the bitter days of reconstruction; and to have heard the author himself sing it is a joy to be held in remembrance." She reports "that once the Duchess of Manchester . . . sang 'The Good Old Rebel' at a London reception, and was rewarded with repeated encores from the Prince of Wales," emphasizing the wide appeal of the tune.¹¹⁰ Far from being exclusive to the former Confederacy, *Collier's* received responses from New Mexico, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, New York, Michigan, Texas, Illinois, Missouri, and California. As for the recalcitrant attitude espoused in the lyrics, C. B. Lower of Washington, D. C., informed the readers that he recited the poem himself many times at both northern and southern veterans' meetings and learned the words from a Confederate veteran thirty years before the magazine's publication. He asked the readers to "pardon the slight touch of profanity for the sake of getting a glimpse into the heart of the genuine old unrepentant, unreconstructed rebel . . . of whom there are only a few more left." Quick then declared, "The song is now a very concrete reminder of passions long dead."¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Quick, "A Good Old Rebel," *Collier's*, 20; Shivers, *Maryland Wits and Baltimore Bards*, 201.

¹¹¹ Quick, "A Good Old Rebel," *Collier's*, 21.

Likely, the passions to which Quick referred were the sectional animosities that led white northerners and southerners into bloody conflict. As the sheet music detailed in the previous chapter suggests, those regional animosities found resolve under the rubric of white, nationalistic brotherhood. However, at the time of Quick's writing, a lynching epidemic produced gruesome manifestations of racist sentiments, largely shaped by the emancipation of African Americans at the end of the Civil War. Ex-Confederates and their immediate descendants, flush with the political and social power of white supremacy, notoriously terrorized African Americans in the postbellum South. Popular culture added fuel to this malicious fire by suggesting excuses for the actions of lynch mobs based on racist stereotypes of black male lust. Amy Louise Wood provides an in-depth analysis of the relationship between lynching and popular culture in her work, *Lynching and Spectacle*. She states that "between 1880 and 1940, white mobs in the South killed at least 3,200 black men," and *The Birth of a Nation* held enormous impact on this trend. To this end, Wood believes the film's images of "the Klan's vengeance" for sexual attacks on white women "imparted immediate and familiar meanings for viewers . . . deeply invested in pro-lynching rhetoric and images."¹¹² The New South officially discouraged the sectional animosity expressed in the "Good Old Rebel." But for those still harboring resentment over the Confederate defeat and the assertion of African American agency that it spawned, lynching provided an accessible expression of anger and resentment for the New South generation who had missed out on the war and imagined themselves as an unreconstructed "Good Old Rebel."

¹¹²Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009) 3, 148. For more on lynching trends in the New South, see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993). In regard to this trend in relation to *The Birth of a Nation*, see James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 88. For a detailed history of *The Birth of a Nation*, see Melvyn Stokes, *D. W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation: A History of "The Most Controversial Motion Picture of All Time"* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

While the “Good Old Rebel” never received the widespread, captive audiences of *The Birth of a Nation*, Arthur Palmer Hudson’s *Folksongs of Mississippi* from 1936 lends helpful insight into the song’s dissemination and the transference of its meaning from one generation to the next. Hudson’s work fell well within the folkloric paradigm in his quest for the original and authentic versions of songs, and Mississippi likely offered an enticing locale for an academic seeking the culture of isolated rural folk. However, his chapter “Songs of the Civil War” importantly questioned the relationship of many of the published Confederate war poems and songs to the actual experience of war. Hudson posited that rather than correctly gauging the sentiments of the average Confederate soldier, which existed at a “sub-literate” level, many of the published verses depicting the lives of soldiers were “left to the armchair poets.”¹¹³

Hudson justly poked holes in the bravado and grandstanding of many of the war song collections that falsely represented calculated verses by known poets and songwriters as expressions of average soldiers. Yet he curiously included the “Good Old Rebel” as a sincere expression that “is the defiant and blasphemous stirrup-cup of an ‘unreconstructed’ off for Mexico,” including annotation of previous investigations like those by Cox, Lomax, and Pound, all while omitting Randolph’s authorship.¹¹⁴ Hudson’s version bears a strong resemblance to Lomax’s *Cowboy* version, indicated by the narrators desire to escape to Mexico. The only remarkable difference is found in the truncated nature of this version, which shortens the song to three verses and creates a chorus of the lines “For I’m a good old rebel, that’s what I am, / And for this Land o’ Freedom I don’t care a damn. / I’m glad I fought against her; I only wish we’d won, / And I don’t ask no pardons for anything I’ve done.” As a noted folklorist, Hudson was likely aware of Randolph’s authorship, yet cites that this version was “secured by Mr. A. H.

¹¹³ Arthur Palmer Hudson, ed., *Folksongs of Mississippi and Their Background* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 253.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 256.

Burnette from the singing of his mother, Mrs. G. A. Burnette, Rena Lara, who has known it all her life.”¹¹⁵ Hudson’s mistake, whether intentional or not, serves as a reminder of the circuitous nature of folklore and the meandering paths the “Good Old Rebel” traveled in the decades after its creation.

Only four years later, Nashville Agrarian Donald Davidson turned to Randolph and the “Good Old Rebel” as a model of artistic discretion in reaction to what he perceived as modernity’s crass commercialism. Speaking to the Tennessee Folklore Society in 1940, Davidson embraced popular music only to the extent that it intersected with folk music and categorizes four distinct attitudes toward folk music: the Historical-Scholarly, the Enthusiastic-Promotional, the Commercial-Exploitative, and an unnamed category. Davidson saw benefits in every category, even the Commercial-Exploitative evinced in the hillbilly bands of the Grand Ole Opry, which he claims “began at the genuine folk level,” only to betray the folk in search of monetary gain, composing “quasi-folk songs . . . which bring in royalties from phonograph records and music-sheets.” He saves his highest praise for his unnamed category, defined by the selfless contribution to the folk canon as an end unto itself. Tellingly, he uses “I’m a Good Old Rebel” as an example of such a work. He claims the song was composed by a “known author and indeed published soon after its composition” but true to his and the author’s presumed intentions, fails to provide detailed information about this song or its author. Davidson describes this formally composed song as taking the veil of a folk song “because the author let his song go, to whoever would like it, for what it was worth to Confederates and others, not for what it was worth to a music publisher.”¹¹⁶

Marketing the Unreconstructed South

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 259-260.

¹¹⁶ Donald Davidson, “Current Attitudes Toward Folklore,” in *Still Rebels, Still Yankees and Other Essays* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1972), 134, 135.

The privileges of the South's social hierarchies remain implicit in Davidson's depiction of the "Good Old Rebel" as the highest form of folk song, as neither he nor Randolph desired the monetary or social benefits of commercialization. However, the nascent commercialism of the interwar years won much of the rights to the Confederate legacy, eventually giving new life to the "Good Old Rebel" and new structures of feeling in popular culture of the mid-twentieth century. Karen L. Cox notes the prevalence of Confederate merchandising in her work, *Dreaming of Dixie*. She locates Old South and vaguely Confederate-themed images in the social tableaux of a number of national and regional brands from Maxwell House Coffee to Avon Cosmetics.¹¹⁷ Maxwell House particularly relied on these advertising strategies. For the Nashville-based coffee company, the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency created a fictional genealogy for the brand that dated its origins in the antebellum South, despite its actual birth in 1887. These Maxwell House advertisements led potential buyers to believe this product held distinct qualities associated with a romantic, pre-industrialized, socially static South. This advertising strategy, which they maintained into the 1940s, appealed to middle class white women, Maxwell House's core demographic, because it sold "Beauty, romance, and social prestige," not to mention racial privilege.

This stylization of the antebellum South represents an extremely popular narrative about southern history, easily related to the Lost Cause sentiments of the immediate postwar decades. Perhaps due to her focus on the J. Walter Thompson archive and that company's emphasis on the genteel vision of the prewar South, Cox ignores the unreconstructed southerner. Historian Grace Elizabeth Hale uncovered tobacco plug names like "Johnny Reb, Rebel Girl, Rebel Boy, Confederate . . . and Good and Tough," which come closer to supporting an unreconstructed

¹¹⁷ Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie*, 47-57.

structure of feeling.¹¹⁸ Yet even these names seemingly disappeared from the shelves by the years interceding the World Wars. These brands also fail to render the full brunt of the “Good Old Rebel” version of southern whiteness that holds the capacity for defiance of government authority and violence against African Americans. In the early 1930s, Charles Rowland Peaslee Farnsley quietly trademarked Rebel Yell Whiskey, a product that came to fill that void, symbolize the unreconstructed South, and eventually use the “Good Old Rebel” song as a promotional tool.

Farnsley named his whiskey Rebel Yell as an appeal to a version of Civil War memory that relished the defiant spirit of Confederate troops, encapsulated by their infamous war whoop. Yet Rebel Yell represented only one of the many whiskey names in Farnsley’s stable. Others included Lost Cause, Copperhead, and Stars and Bars, originally all produced at the Stitzel-Weller Distillery in Louisville, Kentucky and bearing slogans like “Bottled Especially for the Quartermaster Corps, C. S. A.”¹¹⁹ While one may expect Farnsley to embody the unreconstructed sentiment as much as his whiskey names, a much different story emerges, one laden with a paradoxical relationship to the Confederate legacy, similar to that of Innes Randolph. Detailing Farnsley’s life as a whiskey impresario, lawyer, and mayor of Louisville will evince the role of Confederate memory in the slippage from modernity to postmodernity during the mid-twentieth century.

Farnsley’s relationship with whiskey, and specifically the Stitzel-Weller Distillery, evolved from his uncle, Alex T. Farnsley’s involvement, who began working as a salesman in 1893 for the then-named W. L. Weller and Sons Distillery, covering the distillery’s southern

¹¹⁸ Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1999), 170.

¹¹⁹ Ed Edstrom, “Farnsley’s Originality Is Changing the City,” *The Courier-Journal Magazine*, November 28, 1948, 19.

territory. By December 31, 1907, Farnsley, along with his business partner Julian Van Winkle, filed the Articles of Incorporation that bought out the shares that belonged to the original Weller family. Alex Farnsley's ability to buy into the company likely benefited from his marriage to Marie Antoinette Danforth, granddaughter of Dr. E. D. Standiford, a farmer, banker, and one time president of the L&N Railroad. Between them, Alex Farnsley and Van Winkle owned 203 of the company's 206 shares of stock by 1915.¹²⁰ Considered the "money man" that complimented Van Winkle's flair for salesmanship, Alex Farnsley managed the finances of the prosperous distillery until his death in 1941.¹²¹

The trajectory of Alex Farnsley's career alone may raise some suspicions concerning the distillery's connection to the Confederate past. Banking, product drumming, and railroads all stand as notably New South occupations, so often derided by defenders of the unreconstructed version of memory, and exemplify the "mammonism" decried by celebrants of the Lost Cause civil religion in the first fifty years after the Civil War.¹²² In fact, the mantra of New South boosters called for the end of sectionalism as a necessary prerequisite for the South's prosperity. Men like Henry Grady, Robert Bingham, and a young Woodrow Wilson expressed thankfulness for Confederate defeat and recognized the providential turn of events that ended slavery. Overly optimistic, Wilson believed that emancipation unhinged the region from its dependence on mono-crop agriculture as an economic basis.¹²³ Daniel A. Tompkins went so far as to liken

¹²⁰ Sally Van Winkle Campbell, *But Always Fine Bourbon: Pappy Van Winkle and the Story of Old Fitzgerald* (Louisville, KY: Limestone Lane Press, 1999) 26-30. Campbell's work represents a family history of the Van Winkles. Although sentimental in its depiction of the Van Winkle family and the Stitzel-Weller Distillery, her book holds important information regarding the genesis of this notable business in the history of Kentucky bourbon. For corroborative evidence, see Harry Harrison Kroll, *Bluegrass, Belles, and Bourbon: A Pictorial History of Whisky in Kentucky* (South Brunswick and New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1967), 208.

¹²¹ Campbell, *But Always Fine Bourbon*, 58.

¹²² For a comparison of the New South in relation to the Lost Cause as civil religion, see Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 79-99.

¹²³ Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (Montgomery, Alabama: New South Books, 2002), 105-107.

slavery to a contagion that stymied the antebellum South's vigorous enterprise. In this view, the Civil War simply diagnosed slavery as the true economic malignancy, Confederate defeat removed it, and the New South picked up the entrepreneurial vision the South abandoned in its embrace of slavery.¹²⁴ The Farnsleys and Van Winkles represented this New South spirit, perhaps made easier by Kentucky's border state status and tenuous connection to the Confederacy. The businessmen of their generation were more likely to forget the Confederate past and move on rather than espouse the attitudes of the unreconstructed white South.

The Stitzel-Weller Distillery drastically increased its standing in the bourbon community in 1933, with the purchase of the Old Judge Distillery, acquiring the popular and revered brand, Old Fitzgerald. Stitzel-Weller remained a relatively small, family-owned operation, but the production of the venerated Old Fitzgerald and industrial alcohol for gunpowder manufacturing during World War II sustained the business during the lean times of 1930s and 1940s.¹²⁵ This climate of financial prosperity and entrepreneurialism enabled Charles Farnsley to play with the past in ways unimaginable or unappealing to his uncle's generation. As a young lawyer and businessman, the myths of the Confederacy attracted Farnsley. A devotee to the writings and politics of Thomas Jefferson, Farnsley mistook Confederates for the rightful inheritors of Jefferson's philosophies, later referring to this time in his life as his "Confederate phase."¹²⁶

This "phase" proved a formidable influence on his public image, yielding the small-batch production of Rebel Yell and the other Confederate-themed imprints that Farnsley originally bottled as gifts for his friends. While some assert that the Rebel Yell branding represents an appeal to Civil War enthusiasts, the present study suggests something more complicated

¹²⁴ Ibid., 171.

¹²⁵ Campbell, *But Always Fine Bourbon*, 58, 86.

¹²⁶ Edstrom, "Farnsley's Originality Is Changing the City," *The Courier-Journal Magazine*, November 28, 1948, 19; For an example Farnsley's thoughts on Jefferson, see his review of Julian P. Boyd, et al., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* in *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 12, no. 4 (November 1950): 714-715.

motivated Farnsley's whiskey's names, as he initially never intended the whiskey to obtain wide distribution.¹²⁷ Instead, Rebel Yell and his other whiskeys stand as evidence of his affection for the trappings of the imagined antebellum South at a certain period of his life. Along with these whiskeys, Farnsley adopted a series of Confederate signifiers, including a "Kentucky colonel" black string tie that local department stores sold during his tenure as mayor of Louisville from 1948 to 1952 and billed as the "Farnsley tie."¹²⁸

Farnsley also carried a carpetbag as his traveling case, offering a display of the humor with which he seasoned his Confederate imagery. A 1948 profile of the recently elected mayor by *Life* magazine mistook this sense of humor for an "unreconstructed love of the old South," when they relayed that Farnsley was once found weeping over a Civil War radio drama. The *Life* reporter states that "When asked what the matter was, Farnsley wailed, 'Can't you hear? They've just taken Richmond.'"¹²⁹ In a similarly humorous vein, on his spate of whiskey trademarks, Farnsley allegedly tried to name one Damnyankee. The Federal Alcohol Administration rejected this request, penciling in "Bad Taste" on the application. Many sources claim that Farnsley immediately and irreverently filed another rejected trademark request for the brand Old Bad Taste.¹³⁰ Even his home held true to his Confederate persona and carried symbolic weight in terms of geography. Located halfway down a one-block long street called Confederate Place near the University of Louisville, the Farnsley residence created a metaphorical midpoint of the development of the South, with the Southern Railway train station

¹²⁷ For an alternative explanation, see Diane Heilenman, "Boys of Bourbon: The Lore Behind the Labels," *The Courier-Journal*, May 3, 2009. Heilenman claims Farnsley named his brands with Confederate monikers as a marketing ploy to "Civil War buffs."

¹²⁸ Edstrom, "Farnsley's Originality Is Changing the City," *The Courier-Journal Magazine*, 19; "The Make-Do Man," *Time: The Weekly News Magazine*, November 21, 1949, 24.

¹²⁹ "Louisville Gets a Strange New Mayor," *Life*, April 5, 1948, 39.

¹³⁰ Gerald Carson, *The Social History of Bourbon: An Unhurried Account of Our Star-Spangled American Drink* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 1963), 54; Edstrom, *The Courier-Journal Magazine*, 19; "Louisville Gets a Strange New Mayor," *Life* vol. 24, no. 14 April 5, 1948, 39. Carson claims that the Old Bad Taste application is not true but that Farnsley considered it.

at one end of the street and a Confederate monument on the other.¹³¹ Situated between the symbols of the New and Old Souths resided Farnsley, a southerner who remained comfortable trafficking in the symbols and language of both ideologies. And like Innes Randolph, Farnsley seems to have held a strong sense of humor, even as he donned a Confederate persona. An examination of his political career evinces the dialectical nature of the Farnsley who obsessed over the past and the Farnsley who held progressive aspirations for his future and the betterment of the Louisville community.

His time as mayor demonstrates his ability to dwell in both worlds simultaneously. After an unsuccessful campaign for the U. S. Senate in 1940, Farnsley assumed Louisville's mayoral post on March 2, 1948, following the death of Mayor E. Leland Taylor on February 16 of that year.¹³² By the time of his first mayoral election for the seat of the deceased Taylor, Farnsley already held a reputation as promoter of the Confederate legacy. According to *The Courier-Journal Magazine* his embodiment of the rebel image warranted the March 17, 1940 *Cincinnati Enquirer* to remark, "Charley is a page from an 1890 album, and the gray-clad hosts of the Old South have in his heart one refuge that Appomattox did not sign away."¹³³

Whether this reputation gave way to a personal evolution or perhaps belied latent desires, Farnsley's record as mayor displayed a penchant for progressive and commonsensical approaches to politics. Immediately after his interim election by the Board of Aldermen on a 6 to 5 vote, Farnsley implemented drastic, politically savvy policies for the city. For instance, faced with an insufficient road budget, Farnsley opted for "half-soling" the streets, which meant paving only the driving lanes, leaving the parking lanes on the side in need of future repair. He

¹³¹ Edstrom, *The Courier-Journal Magazine*, 19.

¹³² Edstrom, "Farnsley's Originality Is Changing the City," *The Courier-Journal Magazine*, November 28, 1948, 18; "Farnsley Beats Stewart," *The Courier-Journal*, November 2, 1948, 18.

¹³³ Edstrom, "Farnsley's Originality Is Changing the City," *The Courier-Journal Magazine*, November 28, 1948, 19.

also closed certain streets to make “tot lots” in which children could play free from the threat of traffic. Perhaps in a nod to his Jeffersonian ideals, Farnsley established “beef sessions” every Monday, as an opportunity for constituents to voice their complaints regarding the city’s management in a personal meeting with the mayor. And in a show of political bravery, he enacted a one per cent occupational tax to combat a \$3,000,000 budget shortfall the summer before the general election in November.¹³⁴

Despite this seemingly ill-advised tax increase, the Democrat Farnsley handily won the election on November 2, 1948 by a margin of 11,521 votes over Republican challenger James G. Stewart.¹³⁵ Farnsley served the duration of his term, maintaining public support and championing forward-thinking causes for Louisville even after he left office in 1953. Farnsley’s deft showmanship played an important role in his popularity and his ability to pass policies unthinkable in other southern cities during the mid-twentieth century. An integral part of this knack for publicity stemmed from his imaginary “unreconstructed love for the old South.” Essentially appointed by the Board of Aldermen in March of 1948, Farnsley appeared in *Life* magazine and Louisville’s *The Courier-Journal* posing in front of the Confederate monument, smiling behind bottles of Rebel Yell, and generally playing Confederate in an appeal to the voting base of Kentucky’s largest city by the time of the next election in November of the same year. While his personal history supports his affinity for all things Confederate, facts the public likely did not know include his membership in both the Sons of Colonial Wars and the Urban League. The descendant of slaveholders, Farnsley proved instrumental in the peaceful desegregation of the city by “supporting a Southern Police School in Louisville, teaching cops new ways to handle racial tensions.” Furthermore, he enabled the integration of the University

¹³⁴ Ibid., 18-19.

¹³⁵ “Incumbent Victorious By 11,521,” *The Courier-Journal*, November 2, 1948, 1.

of Louisville in 1950 through the backing of his political cohort and university chairman of the board of trustees, Wilson Wyatt. A 1949 profile of the mayor relays that when a white woman “complained about colored people moving into her street, Charlie said sharply, ‘A Negro has a right to live anywhere.’ In Kentucky such a remark takes courage.”¹³⁶

In light of this evidence, this study asserts that Farnsley represents anything but “unreconstructed” adherence to the Confederate trappings he donned. Instead, Farnsley demonstrates the ability to play with that identity to the benefit of political expediency. This playfulness with the past in the formation of one’s present identity displays inherent characteristics of postmodernism. As defined by Fredric Jameson, postmodernism represents “an attempt to think historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically.” This defining feature remains important in the construction of historical narratives, which address a crisis in historicity, or “the existential fact of life that there no longer does seem to be any organic relationship between the American history we learn from school books and the lived experience” of the globalized world.¹³⁷ As veterans returned from the Second World War and Louisville’s population expanded from 307,745 in 1930 to 369,129 by 1950, Farnsley likely displayed a comforting connection to the past that assuaged any current or impending crises in historicity for white southerners of the late 1940s.¹³⁸ Importantly, other white southern politicians dealt in the unreconstructed structures of feeling with less positive results. The same year as Farnsley’s election, Strom Thurmond, reared to venerate the likes of Ben Tillman and Wade Hampton, led his Dixiecrats out of the Democratic National Convention, embarking on a

¹³⁶ William Manchester, “Louisville Cashes in on Culture,” *Harper’s Magazine*, August 1955, 79-80; George Kent, “Mayor Charlie Cuts Corners,” *National Municipal Review* 38, no. 9 (October 1949): 433.

¹³⁷ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 1, 22.

¹³⁸ U. S. Census Bureau, “Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1930,” Table 16, accessed November 12, 2012, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab16.txt>; U. S. Census Bureau, “Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1950,” Table 18, accessed November 12, 2012, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab18.txt>.

course to “distinguish himself as the South’s last Confederate.”¹³⁹ Perhaps in the spirit of the Dixiecrats, popular song added fuel to the unreconstructed fire. In 1948, the Mutual Music Society, Inc. of New York City released “Save Your Confederate Money, Boys (The South Shall Rise Again,)” which boasted the chorus, “Bless mint juleps, yes indeed / And Whitney’s cotton gin, / And if at first we don’t secede, / I say let’s try again? / There’ll be boys in gray paradin’ down Broadway / On that you can depend. / SAVE YOUR CONFEDERATE MONEY BOYS / The South shall rise again.”¹⁴⁰ Farnsley sought no such notoriety or tone, even as he continued to wear his string tie and pose in front of Confederate monuments. During his tenure in the U. S. House of Representatives from 1964 to 1966, Farnsley even championed President Johnson’s Great Society programs, signed the Voting Rights Act, and helped establish the National Endowment for the Arts.¹⁴¹

For scholars, Farnsley offers a refreshing take on the southern politicians of the mid-twentieth century, especially when compared to the usual profiles of Thurmond, Wallace, Maddox, and their constituencies’ use of Confederate symbols and language to bolster campaigns of white supremacy and conservative social hierarchies.¹⁴² Yet Farnsley’s record of progressive politics remains largely unheralded. He certainly deserves credit for his foresight in championing a healthy cultural and artistic environment that remains a hallmark of Louisville today. However, outside the circle of library and symphony patrons of Kentucky, Farnsley’s most well known legacy remains Rebel Yell Whiskey. Granted, very few people might recognize the Farnsley name or associate it with whiskey, but Rebel Yell endures as an iconic

¹³⁹ Joseph Crespino, *Strom Thurmond’s America* (New York: Hill and Wang, A Division of Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2012), 22, 120.

¹⁴⁰ Larry Markes, Hank Fort, and Justin Stone, “Save Your Confederate Money, Boys (The South Shall Rise Again)” (New York: Mutual Music Society, Inc., 1948), Wade Hall Sheet Music Collection.

¹⁴¹ “C. P. Farnsley, 83, A Colorful Fixture in Kentucky Politics,” *The New York Times*, June 21, 1990; “A Complex Heritage,” *The Courier-Journal*, November 19, 2008.

¹⁴² For a recent overview of this trend, see Jason Sokol, *The Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1970* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 129, 159, 197, 202, 249, 275.

southern brand, and the kind of South it sells falls in with the unreconstructed, “Good Old Rebel” structures of feeling. Similar to Randolph’s association with the “Good Old Rebel,” Farnsley had little to do with his creation’s sustained popularity. Rebel Yell went out of production sometime between the late 1940s and early 1950s and Farnsley dropped his association with the brand, turning over responsibilities to the Stitzel-Weller Distillery. Nevertheless, when the distillery increased its production of and ambition for the brand in 1961, the advertising campaign that ensued held the same rhetoric and images begun by Farnsley when he played Confederate. Like Randolph, Farnsley had created the unreconstructed southerner through his idealized performance of that role in the cultivation of his outward persona, creating a precedent for the advertising campaigns of Rebel Yell Whiskey.

The first round of promotional products for the revived brand included a copy of the sheet music for the song, “O I’m a Good Old Rebel.” The Rebel Yell copies look identical to the sheet music detailed in the previous chapter but with the addition of a message on the back. Near the bottom of the page, in small type, the Stitzel-Weller Distillery printed the following:

I Am A Good Old Rebel

Was written (during Reconstruction) by Major Innis Randolph, a Virginian, who had been on the staff of General J. E. B. Stuart during The War Between the States.

This copy was reproduced from a photograph of a very rare original, held in the possession of the Confederate Historical Society of Kentucky.

The proceeds from its sale will be used to correct the erroneous impression, now in existence (in some parts of this country) that Kentucky did not secede from the Union.

And to correct an injustice of long standing by importuning the United States Congress to restore full citizenship, posthumously, to General Robert E. Lee, in tribute to the virtues of courage, patriotism, integrity and selfless devotion to duty, so amply displayed during his lifetime in defense of the Lost Cause.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ “O I’m a Good Old Rebel,” Rebel Yell Whiskey promotional material, Stitzel-Weller Distillery, ca. 1961, author’s collection.

Given the song's internalization as the sincere expression of sectional animosity, it remains unsurprising that the Rebel Yell brand sanctioned its use as an early promotional tool, even given the historical inaccuracies in regard to Kentucky's secession. In the early 1960s, interest in the Civil War reached a peak in concomitance with the centennial commemoration of that conflict, and Stitzel-Weller likely saw a business opportunity in reviving this bit of Americana.¹⁴⁴ Specifically, Stitzel-Weller used this music as promotional material offered to the Rebel Yell Brigade, a club that marketed exclusive privileges to the brand's devotees.¹⁴⁵ However, the tone of this advertising campaign fails to align with the original, likely humorous intent of the brand's progenitor. Just like Randolph before him, Farnsley's inside joke, meant for his close friends, assumed a life of its own once it left the auspices of the personal and became available for general consumption.

A letter from an old friend of Farnsley's provides evidence of his initial aim. On June 26, 1961, Angus D. MacLean, president of the Wood-Mosaic Corporation of Louisville, wrote to Julian Van Winkle, Jr., son of Pappy Van Winkle, thanking him for a complimentary bottle of Rebel Yell. He stated that the gift recalled memories "back many years" to a trip taken with Farnsley from Louisville to New Orleans on a riverboat, the Gordon C. Greene. As MacLean recalled, "Charles' luggage consisted of a carpet bag and two cases of Rebel Yell Whiskey. It was a colorful and memorable trip." He went on to tell that his wife was "somewhat pregnant" during the trip, so the men stored the whiskey with her, ensuring that they "inquire[d] as to her health" regularly throughout the trip. MacLean concluded the letter, writing, "I am very glad that you have revived this fine old name and you can be sure that now as in the past it will have my seal of approval. Many thanks for your thoughtfulness and generosity in sending me this

¹⁴⁴ For an in-depth analysis of the centennial and its conflicts, see Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*.

¹⁴⁵ Joseph Schildt, a former marketing employee for Stitzel-Weller Distillery, email message forwarded to author by Mike Veach of the Filson Historical Society, January 30, 2013.

new edition.”¹⁴⁶ This letter provides a glimpse into the jovial side of Farnsley’s foray into whiskey production, as well as his “Confederate phase.” One may imagine the enjoyment obtained from taking a steamboat from Kentucky to New Orleans for Farnsley, who, at one time, invested so much into the creation of his antebellum image. But where Farnsley moved past these trappings and evolved with the progression of time, others like MacLean considered Rebel Yell a “fine old name,” worthy of restoration. The younger Van Winkle exploited this sentiment and the Stitzel-Weller Distillery launched a campaign that sealed Rebel Yell’s reputation as the whiskey of the unreconstructed South.

One typical advertisement of this 1960s and early 1970s revival reads, “If you ever see this whiskey for sale up North, please let us know.” The fine print makes their tone even more explicit, stating, “this whiskey is the original ‘unreconstructed’ Bourbon that pours a bit of the South in every drink. It is for sale only below the Mason-Dixon Line.” In the concluding frame of this ad, the copy claims, “Southerners who know Bourbon know Rebel Yell. Its unique taste was born in 1849 on a recipe formulated by the founder of our family distillery. He never intended for his whiskey to be sold up North. It never will be.”¹⁴⁷ This text marks the distillery’s effort to stake claim to its version of southern identity, positioning itself as a means to personal secession with each bottle bought. Through its insinuation that to buy Rebel Yell ensures one’s southern identity, Rebel Yell advertisements appealed to those who, playfully or not, identified with the unreconstructed structures of feeling.

The advertisement’s insistence on the whiskey’s founding in 1849, despite the fact that this predates rebels and their yell, denotes its strident declaration of authenticity, indicating an attractive feature for those experiencing a “crisis of historicity” in the postmodern era. This

¹⁴⁶ Campbell, *But Always Fine Bourbon*, 165.

¹⁴⁷ Rebel Yell advertisement, *The Morning Herald*, Hagerstown, Maryland, June 19, 1972.

appeal stands especially paradoxical given the design of the advertisement. With Warholian, postmodern style, the ad features eight repeating frames of the Rebel Yell bottle, with a hand and a glass in the process of pouring and drinking the whiskey. Here, Rebel Yell Whiskey stands as the Old South connection for consumers who were likely aware that no authentic rebel existed beyond the image on the bottle, and even more likely, did not care. David Harvey addresses this state of mind, remarking, “The search for roots” in the postmodern era “ends up at worst being produced and marketed as an image, as a simulacrum or pastiche.”¹⁴⁸ For southerners and non-southerners alike, Rebel Yell offered that pastiche of the “unreconstructed,” conveniently located on liquor store shelves, yet giving it an air of authenticity by its exclusivity to markets outside the South.

This blend of the authentic with the stylized image speaks to the postmodern shift occurring in the 1960s. The company softened its image for an appeal to the readers of *Southern Living* with an advertisement titled “An invitation to dine in the splendid style of the Old South.” This ad from 1969 promoted a cookbook called *Deep South Cookery and Potable* offered free “for the asking wherever you buy Rebel Yell . . . Or drop us a note and we’ll send you a copy.” Again, in an appeal to authenticity, this ad asserted that “Rebel Yell is as different from ordinary whiskey as home-style Southern cooking is from foil-wrapped tv dinners,” ending with the tagline “The Southern Sour Mash Bourbon Sold Only Below the Mason-Dixon Line.”¹⁴⁹ In a more conservative advertising style, Stitzel-Weller removed the “unreconstructed” language, while maintaining its nostalgic tone for the gendered pages of *Southern Living*. Whether a total shift in its campaigns or a momentary lapse in the unreconstructed rhetoric, Rebel Yell’s appeal to the readers of *Southern Living* failed to bolster the then lagging sales of the Stitzel-Weller

¹⁴⁸ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 303.

¹⁴⁹ “An invitation to dine in the splendid style of the Old South,” *Southern Living*, June 1969, 25.

family of brands, and the company sold to the New York-based Somerset Importers on June 30, 1972.¹⁵⁰

In spite of this change of hands, the Rebel Yell advertising image remained unchanged for the rest of the twentieth century and continued to indoctrinate its consumers in the myths of its origins and intentions. John Shelton Reed offers a barometer reading of the level of this internalization. Upon noticing a new trend of “tacky” advertisements for the brand he apparently loved, Reed investigated the source, rightly expecting a trail that led to Louisville, Kentucky. Instead, he discovered Somerset’s ownership of the supposedly southern brand. To this discovery, Reed indignantly explains,

Yes, that’s right. The “host bourbon of the South,” the one that claims it’s “made and sold only beneath the Mason-Dixon line,” is only made and sold here. What the South gets out of this is a few blue-collar jobs and a bunch of drunks. Some New York outfit with a candy-ass British name gets all the expense-account jobs and “imports” all the profits. There’s a Yankee in the woodpile, and we get the short end of the stick.¹⁵¹

Reed’s surprise at this discovery demonstrates the degree to which Rebel Yell symbolized that important connection to the past. No matter how imaginary, the ruse of authenticity played by this brand fulfilled an important role for its drinkers. While Reed never mentions that the “Good Old Rebel” led to his embrace of Rebel Yell, the use of the song in the early 1960s promotion of the brand functioned as a mask of sincerity, covering Farnsley’s humorous invention. In essence, the use of this song set the tone of Rebel Yell’s branding, not only in correspondence

¹⁵⁰ Campbell, *But Always Fine Bourbon*, 198.

¹⁵¹ John Shelton Reed, “The Rebel Rip-off and the Yankee Dollar,” in *Whistling Dixie: Dispatches from the South* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 4-5.

with the centennial commemoration of the Civil War but also the most heated years of the civil rights movement.

Recording the “Good Old Rebel”

Pinpointing the impact of Rebel Yell’s “Good Old Rebel” promotional material and the popularity of the song in general remains a troubling task. At this point, one may only speculate to the scope of its distribution, as well as the enthusiasm of its reception. A helpful approach to this problem lies in the various publications and recordings of this song surrounding the transfer of Rebel Yell from Farnsley to Van Winkle and the Stitzel-Weller ad campaign. In 1941, Harry Dichter and Elliott Shapiro published an anthology titled, *Early American Sheet Music*, which contained a description of the sheet music, along with information pertaining to the artist of the cover drawing, who they claim as Albert Volck, “a Baltimore dentist and a Southern Sympathizer.” However, they fail to locate an author for the piece, offering only that the writer’s initials are either R. I. or I. R., depending on the transposition of the entwined letters on page two of the music.¹⁵² The assertion of Volck as the illustrator likely stems from his work on another of Randolph’s works, “The Grasshopper: A Tragic Cantata” published in 1878 and dedicated to the Wednesday Club.¹⁵³

E. Merton Coulter noted the poem and song form of the “Good Old Rebel” in his 1947 history of the Reconstruction era South. In typical Dunning school fashion, he offered the poem as evidence that “The South was not supinely cringing in the dust of shattered hopes. It was still manly and could hate lustily, as Ennes [*sic*] Randolph, a Baltimore lawyer, half humorously

¹⁵² Harry Dichter and Elliott Shapiro, *Early American Sheet Music: Its Lure and Its Lore, 1768-1889* (New York: R. Bower Company, 1941), 123.

¹⁵³ Innes Randolph, “The Grasshopper: A Tragic Cantata,” illustrated by A. I. Volck (Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1878 by Innes Randolph in the office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington, D. C.), accessed January 16, 2013, sm1878 13843 urn:hdl:loc.music/sm1878.13843 <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/sm1878.13843>.

showed in the classic hate poem of the English tongue.” He went on to include three of the six stanzas and suggest that the animosities expressed within it forbade the South from celebrating the Fourth of July.¹⁵⁴ This inclusion and explanation demonstrates the underdeveloped interpretation of the song, even in the academic circles of that period. Only four years later, the Civil War Book Club, in conjunction with Broadcast Music, Incorporated, published a reproduction of the sheet music in their “Camp Fire Edition” of *Songs of the Confederacy*. This publication contained the brief explanation of the song as a poem written by Innes Randolph originally titled “The Lay of the Last Rebel,” which “has survived any variations as a part of traditional Southern lore.”¹⁵⁵

The “Good Old Rebel” also appears in at least two more folklore collections from this time period, Vance Randolph’s 1948 *Ozark Folksongs* and volume three of *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore* from 1952. The North Carolina collection offered a bibliographic overview of the song’s publication in much the same manner as Cox and Pound and acknowledged Innes Randolph’s authorship. The editors of this edition published three different versions of the song, gleaned from submissions from across the state, all of which closely resembled Randolph’s original. One such submission from W. S. Fitzgerald of Durham, which listed the title as “The Unreconstructed Rebel,” included a detailed, if inaccurate, description of the song’s origin. Fitzgerald wrote that the words “were composed many years ago by an old Confederate veteran, a Georgia cracker, and were sung by him with banjo accompaniment to a group at a Confederate reunion, probably the one held at Nashville, Tennessee.” Beyond this valuable glimpse into this song’s place within his imagination, Fitzgerald’s account offers evidence of this song’s underground existence, even as listeners were

¹⁵⁴ E. Merton Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press and the Littlefield Fund for Southern History of the University of Texas, 1947), 173-174.

¹⁵⁵ Richard Barksdale Harwell, ed., *Songs of the Confederacy* (New York: Broadcast Music, Inc., 1951), 108.

cognizant of its duplicitous meanings. He stated that the song “represents the extreme but semi-humorous attitude of the old soldier who at the close of the War between the States refused to renew his citizenship by taking the oath of allegiance to the government of the United States. So far as the reporter knows, the words have never appeared in print.”¹⁵⁶

Although he published this version in 1948, Vance Randolph’s inclusion of the “Good Old Rebel” in his Ozark volume reflected his familiarity with the tune since at least 1942, when he recorded a performance of the song by Booth Campbell at Cane Hill, Arkansas. Campbell’s version likely represents the first known audio recording of the song and offered another incarnation of the words, adding the refrain “Oh, I’m glad I’m a good old rebel / Hat, boot, coat, and all / I won’t be reconstructed / No, sir, not at all,” as well as slight variations on this rhyme scheme. Vance Randolph claimed that Campbell “was a little afraid to sing it at first. ‘The country’s at war right now’ he said, ‘and it aint no time for a feller to be singin’ songs ag’in the Flag and the Government.”¹⁵⁷ Oddly, Randolph failed to mention that an audio recording of Campbell’s version appeared the year before on the LP collection *Folk Music of the United States: Anglo-American Songs and Ballads*. Positioned among other folk creations like “Cripple Creek,” “The Soldier’s Joy,” and a Bascom Lamar Lunsford rendition of “Jesse James,” the “Good Old Rebel” was contextualized as a traditional song and an unpolished gem. The liner notes suggest the rawness and vernacular characteristics of these songs should “point up the unique value of the recordings, for through them is preserved for the American people the pure

¹⁵⁶ Henry M. Belden and Arthur Palmer Hudson, ed., *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore, Volume Three: Folksongs from North Carolina* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1952), 464.

¹⁵⁷ Vance Randolph, coll. and ed., *Ozark Folksongs, Volume II: Songs of the South and West* (Columbia, Missouri: The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1948), 294. This volume includes bibliographic information common to the other publications of this type. It also includes two other versions of the song that strongly resemble Randolph’s original.

tradition of folk song.”¹⁵⁸ While this assertion placed the song in the folkloric paradigm, it likely ignored evidence that contradicted its actual roots, which were obviously well published at the time.

Folkways Records threatened to further obfuscate the true roots of the song when it issued a collection of LPs by “attorney turned music merchant,” Hermes Nye, which included a recording of the “Old Rebel” in 1954. The liner notes consist of collages by producer and Folkways founder, Moses Asch, featuring lyrics, Civil War newspaper articles and illustrations, quotations from historical texts, and notes on the songs by Nye. A brief autobiographical description offers interesting details about how the “Good Old Rebel” entered Nye’s repertoire. Nye considered himself “a professional Texan by inclination -- having lived in Amarillo and then Dallas since about 1927.” His music career garnered him work on Dallas radio stations and television programs, supplemented by years “on the local luncheon club and Baptist hayride circuit.” Nye claimed a “sneaking fondness for the English things from Percy and Child” and at one time was “a card-carrying member of the Texas Folk Lore society, have touched the hem of Dobie’s garments and knew John Lomax.” He ended his introduction, stating, “I like college kids, corn pone, bebop slang and flamenco guitar picking.”¹⁵⁹

Far from a neo-Confederate or even a Civil War enthusiast, Nye situates himself as a proto-folky, entrenched in traditional music and aware of its thriving appeal to the bohemian inclinations of college students in the 1950s. Asch likely recorded Nye for the same reasons, and the song list ranges from the pro-southern “Good Old Rebel” to the “Abolitionist Hymn” to

¹⁵⁸ Duncan B. M. Emrich, ed., *Folk Music of the United States: Anglo-American Songs and Ballads* (The Library of Congress Music Division Recording Laboratory, AAFS L20, 1947, 33 1/3 rpm, liner notes.

¹⁵⁹ Hermes Nye, *Ballads of the Civil War, Sung by Hermes Nye with Guitar*, Folkways Records Album No. FP 5004, FP 48 - 7; FP 48 - 8, 1954, 33 1/3 rpm, liner notes, second page. For another version recorded in this same time period, see Harry K. McClintock, *Haywire Mac*, Folkways Records FD 5272, 1972, 33 1/3 rpm. The collection, recorded shortly before McClintock’s death in 1957, features this version complete with narration about how the artist learned the song from his uncle, a Confederate veteran.

include listeners of every persuasion of Civil War memory. His notes on the “Old Rebel” provide a glimpse into the labyrinth of folk and popular cultures that swallowed this song before the codifying effects of professional sound recordings. Juxtaposed with newspaper clippings from the war’s end and the beginnings of Reconstruction, Nye relays the following:

Rumor, who hath so many things which are not true, says this was first sung by Harry Allen of the Washington Light Artillery, of New Orleans; once it came into being it was shouted all over the unreconstructed South. I heard it first about 1946 in Dallas, at one of Sallie Stehr’s parties, from a woman who had it from her grandmother. The cowboys also took up this ditty and kicked it around, and it is known as “The Rabble Soldier” and God knows what else. It is at one, somehow, with the saying you still hear in the deep South, “We could of whipped them Yankees with corn stalks.” “How come you didn’t, then?” “Those cowards wouldn’t fight with cornstalks.”¹⁶⁰

Nye provides a valuable first-hand account of how this song slipped into the cultural milieu of post-Civil War songs and possibly a familiarity with Davidson’s *Cullings From the Confederacy*. These publications and recordings suggest that iterations of the “Good Old Rebel” reached an ever-expanding audience. In doing so, the unreconstructed structures of feeling found greater reception and these audiences found validation in their recalcitrant version of white southern identity. Without knowing the full story of the song and the whiskey it came to represent, consumers felt they were drinking and listening to an authentic expression of the unreconstructed South. This phenomenon holds important implications for Civil War memory, as the “Good Old

¹⁶⁰ Nye, *Ballads of the Civil War*, liner notes, thirty-first page.

Rebel” helped diminish more progressive and emancipationist versions of the war. Furthermore, it proves the validity of considering Civil War memory beyond the semicentennial of the war.

The 1958 *Virginia Cavalcade* article on Randolph referenced in the first chapter followed Nye’s recording in terms of chronological succession of the “Good Old Rebel” in publication. Beyond the biographical information on the author, Davis also offers a brief account of the song’s dissemination, stating, “it has been intoned by cowboys in Texas, drawled by Ozark hill people, murmured along the Mississippi, chorused in the Carolinas, and, naturally, shouted in swelling stanzas at any number of Confederate reunions.” Davis even refers to the same story cited in *Collier’s* concerning the Prince of Wales’s fondness for the song and offers similar anecdotes, stating, “Queen Victoria herself is alleged to have been ‘quite fascinated by it.’ ” Beyond the Anglo attraction to the “Good Old Rebel,” Davis relays that “early in 1942, just after Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt enjoyed hearing an accordionist play it for him at the White House.”¹⁶¹ Indeed, Roosevelt held a healthy appreciation of folk tunes, and the “Good Old Rebel” stood as one of his favorites. He apparently requested it played by local musicians whenever he visited his retreat in Warm Springs, Georgia to express his camaraderie with southern politicians.¹⁶²

In an echo of the *Collier’s* confusion surrounding the song’s authorship, Davis’s article submits that those who sang this tune and proliferated its sentiment “felt in their bones that here was an authentic folk creation, welling up anonymously from the collective throat of a defeated but unconquered people,” suggesting an imaginary white South, whose attitudes stand frozen in time since 1865. He then confides that “if, by quirk, it really derived from an individual pen, then

¹⁶¹ Davis, “Elegant Old Rebel,” *Virginia Cavalcade*, 42-43.

¹⁶² Alan Lomax, “From Lead Belly to Computerized Analysis of Folk Songs,” address at the Celeste Bartos Auditorium in New York City, December 31, 1979, accessed January 18, 2013, <http://research.culturalequity.org/get-dil-details.do?sessionId=74>.

obviously the composer must have been some illiterate Butternut from a back-creek of the Lower South. No other type could conceivably have produced so vindictive, so coarse, so bigoted a paean of hate. But quite another type had.” Davis states firmly that Innes Randolph was indeed the author, offering proof based on a holograph of the poem, signed by Randolph, and dated from Richmond, Virginia on April 9, 1867, the second anniversary of Lee’s surrender at Appomattox. The article fails to question this overly convenient date. Furthermore, this date contradicts Harold Randolph’s assertion relating to the erection of the John Marshall statue in June of 1867. The *Cavalcade* uncovered this bit of evidence “in the irredeemably Northern state of New York,” where it resided in the Emmet Collection of the New York Public Library.¹⁶³

Just prior to Davis’s article the “Good Old Rebel” served as an instrumental theme to the 1957 film *Run of the Arrow*. The film, written and directed by Samuel Fuller, follows the life of O’Meara, a Confederate private in the 6th Virginia Infantry, beginning on April 9, 1865 at Appomattox, Virginia, shortly before Lee’s surrender. O’Meara, played by Rod Steiger with an unexplained Irish brogue, fires the last bullet of the Civil War into the chest of an unsuspecting Union lieutenant and then rifles through the Yankee’s belongings, taking his food, tobacco, and his horse. The film’s orchestral score, composed by Victor Young, incorporates the minor-keyed, “Joe Bowers”-based version of the melody, in the opening credits and then continues this theme throughout the O’Meara’s shooting of the U. S. officer. After taking his belongings, O’Meara delivers the only wounded enemy to the field hospital and witnesses Lee saluting and riding away from Grant after signing the surrender. Unfettered by concerns of historical accuracy, the Confederate doctor digs out the bullet, gives it to O’Meara and says, “It’s the last bullet shot in this war.” The film immediately cuts to a white banjo player, portrayed by folksinger, Frank Warner, riding in a wagon, and singing the “Good Old Rebel.” As he finishes

¹⁶³ Ibid.

the tune, he arrives in a town where O'Meara bitterly defies his mother's wish that he put aside his loyalty to the Confederacy in front of the town's people. O'Meara refuses to surrender and swear allegiance to the Union, even as the banjo player gives him the refitted "last bullet" as a memento of the war's end. O'Meara then angrily tells anyone that bothers to listen that he hates the United States, emphasizing, "I am a rebel because I want to be, not because I have to be." Perhaps in a nod to Lomax's "Texas composite," O'Meara decides to go to the West with the "savages" and mount a perpetual resistance.¹⁶⁴

The "Good Old Rebel" instrumental theme appears again as O'Meara rides west, signaling that this new geography may welcome his unreconstructed identity. In a series of events that may sound familiar to fans of *Dances with Wolves*, he quickly meets an attractive American Indian woman, marries her, joins the Sioux nation, and vows to fight against the United States if necessary. After compromises with the U. S. Army concerning where to build a fort turn violent, O'Meara seeks peace with the leader of the cavalrymen, who turns out to be the very Yankee O'Meara nearly killed at Appomattox. The brazen lieutenant, hell-bent on war with the Sioux, refuses a truce and welcomes a battle, only to be defeated and captured. With heavy-handed poetic justice, O'Meara retrieves his "last bullet" memento and mercifully shoots the lieutenant just as the Sioux begin to emasculate the still conscious U. S. soldier. O'Meara's actions then raise suspicions among his adopted tribe, including his wife, who forces him to recognize that he belongs with his fellow white men in the United States. As the film ends, O'Meara leaves his Sioux family and his postwar bitterness to rejoin his "tribe," symbolized by his clutching of a United States flag. O'Meara then rides away from the Sioux camp with the defeated soldiers, as the words of a sympathetic army officer from earlier in the film echo in his ears, "Lee's surrender wasn't the death of the South. It was the birth of the United States." With

¹⁶⁴ *Run of the Arrow*, directed by Samuel Fuller (1957; Globe Enterprises/RKO Pictures).

a look of resignation on O'Meara's face, the screen fades to black and the imperative, "THE END OF THIS STORY CAN ONLY BE WRITTEN BY YOU," flashes on the screen.¹⁶⁵

In the midst of the civil rights movement, Fuller's garish approach likely shocked white moviegoers in the South and beyond, as what seemingly starts out as a vindication of the unreconstructed South gradually turns into an indictment. The "Good Old Rebel" helps this narrative trajectory. For those moviegoers familiar with the tune, the first instrumental notes sounded an aural cue validating their worldview. Even the vocal version might have reassured unreconstructed viewers that O'Meara held the correct recalcitrant attitude when he states, "Best news I got was when Lincoln was dead."¹⁶⁶ Yet Fuller's intentions and ultimate message stand in direct opposition of such validation. In an interview from 1965 Fuller conveyed that he tried to capture the feeling of the South in 1865, while focusing a critical lens on the contemporary white South of the late 1950s. "I can appreciate and even accept a sore loser . . . You get unhappy. That's OK," he told *Movie* magazine's Stig Bjorkman. "However, I don't think it's normal for you to maintain that childish mood of being sore for over seventy-five years. I wanted to show that there was no change in the United States from 1865 to when I made the picture in 1957." Fuller continues to lambast the region, asserting, "They still fly the Confederate flag down there . . . And the feeling of hate, instead of decreasing has increased. That's the reason for the ending of the picture. I wrote that only 'you' can write the end of the story. And I meant the Southern people. I hope they left that in."¹⁶⁷

The "Good Old Rebel" makes the perfect soundtrack for expressing such sentiment, as it freezes in time the most bitter postwar attitudes. Fuller acknowledges as much in his

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Samuel Fuller, interview by Stig Bjorkman for *Movie* 17 (Winter 1969-70): 25-29, in *Samuel Fuller: Interviews*, Gerald Peary, ed. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 10-11.

autobiography. The writer and director relays mixed emotions about Steiger's portrayal of O'Meara but admits that the actor shined "when, on his way home after the war, he sits on a fence, listening to a man who's singing a soft, low Confederate ballad. We'd researched that song and made sure it was authentic. At first it sounds like just a nice tune. Gradually, the lyrics make you realize the deep hatred that burned in the hearts of Southerners. You can see it on Steiger's face. He was able to reflect their reality."¹⁶⁸ By 1969, Fuller found an echo of O'Meara in the nameless, murderous rednecks of *Easy Rider*. He told *Cinema* magazine he wanted Steiger's depiction of O'Meara to represent

the basic root of all hate that exists in the South. That's why I liked *Easy Rider* so much. The man with the shotgun is today what Steiger was one hundred years ago. The people in the South are afraid of one thing in particular: not just that their way of life [might be] wrong, but that it will be forgotten. The Deep South has contributed absolutely nothing to American history.¹⁶⁹

Fuller's argument against the white South certainly smacks of hyperbole to contemporary readers but truthfully captures the frustration felt by those who wished for more progressive visions of region, race, and nation in the mid-twentieth century. The director's purposeful choice of the "Good Old Rebel" as the conduit of white southern obstinacy speaks to the power of the song's lyrics, even if its actual creation holds a duplicitous relationship to the brand of authenticity intended by the director. The "Good Old Rebel" worked so well because its tone obscured the South's various evolutions after 1865. Therein lies the power of popular culture to shape collective memory. For Fuller, this song emblemized an imagined South that *still* flew the

¹⁶⁸ Samuel Fuller, *A Third Face: My Tale of Writing, Fighting and Filmmaking*, with Christa Lang Fuller and Jerome Henry Rudes, foreword by Martin Scorsese (New York: Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 2002) Kindle edition.

¹⁶⁹ Samuel Fuller, interview by Ian Christie et al., for *Cinema* (Cambridge, England), February 1970, 6 - 8, in *Samuel Fuller: Interviews*, Gerald Peary, ed. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 43.

Confederate flag in 1965, regardless of the fact that most states had only recently added the flag as a symbol of protest against federally mandated desegregation.¹⁷⁰ The mere existence of this song confirmed Fuller's expectations about the unreconstructed white South and functioned as a signifier of the Same Cause ideology for his artistic creation. Ironically, his usage of the "Good Old Rebel" in this manner helped erase the nuances of history in favor of the polemics of memory. Of course, others made the same mistake as Fuller in the midst of the civil rights movement and the centennial of the Civil War. In 1960, folklorist B. A. Botkin used two lines from the "Good Old Rebel" as an epigraph to the postwar section in his collection, *A Civil War Treasury of Tales, Legends, and Folklore*, revealing that even a noted scholar in the mid twentieth century stood capable of presenting this song as an expression of ex-Confederate bitterness without explanation of its origins.¹⁷¹

Through the first half of the twentieth century, folklorists, whiskey brands, sociologists, and movie directors fell under the spell of what Howard Zinn called the "Southern mystique," his terminology for the inscrutability that seemed to defensively shroud the white South from both outside critique and self-awareness. His work marks just one in a host of studies that announced the end of that mystique and a loosening of the white South's stranglehold on the political and social hierarchies of the region thanks to decades of African American resistance.¹⁷² Yet as the 1960s ended and the civil rights movement splintered into strategic factions and the subdivisions of identity politics, conservative white southerners sought new routes to reassert their power. In the 1970s and 1980s, this affirmation of supremacy ironically turned identity politics against

¹⁷⁰ For a history of the Confederate flag and surrounding controversies, see John M. Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Emblem* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2005).

¹⁷¹ B. A. Botkin, ed., *A Civil War Treasury of Tales, Legends, and Folklore*, illustrated by Warren Chappell (New York: Random House, Inc., 1960), 542.

¹⁷² Howard Zinn, *The Southern Mystique* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964).

minorities and the disfranchised that were its original beneficiaries. For some white southerners, the idea of whiteness as an ethnicity spoke to their need to defend their newly opened society. Unsurprisingly, the “Good Old Rebel” provided a soundtrack and a totemic image for those seeking to ward off the perceived attacks on southern whiteness, a topic explored in the following chapter.

3. SOUTHERN WHITENESS ON THE CYBER FRONT:

THE “GOOD OLD REBEL” IN THE INTERNET AGE

Through the simultaneous occurrences of the Civil War centennial and the civil rights movement of the 1960s, unreconstructed white southerners clung to the symbols and rhetoric of the Confederacy, resuscitating the Same Cause to meet the momentum of the changing political and social landscape. The “Good Old Rebel” lingered at the edges of popular culture through venues like Fuller’s *Run of the Arrow*. Coupled with its existence within the folkloric paradigm, a combination of popular culture and academia prolonged the song’s lifespan, buoying it along the undercurrents of popular culture’s mainstream. In particular, Fuller’s cinematic example demonstrates that once the “Good Old Rebel” entered the popular imagination, Innes Randolph’s intent had faded from relevance, making it available for misappropriation by the mid twentieth century. From the evidence offered within this study, we know that many accepted this song as a genuine expression and part of an unreconstructed southerner’s structure of feeling. Willing listeners internalized this way of feeling white and southern as the idealized, unaffected performance of that identity, eventually influencing the way many people view the Confederacy’s defeat, and by extension, the meaning of the Civil War. Even Fuller’s politically progressive vision of Civil War memory failed to see the parodic intentions of Randolph’s original, and instead, positioned the “Good Old Rebel” and its

embodiment, the poor white southerner, as repositories of sectional animosity and defiance against the federal government. Taken as such, the “Good Old Rebel” conjures a frightening image of an un-surrendered, unreconstructed Confederate soldier searching for “lyin’ thievin’ Yankees,” on whom to enact his latent violence.

This image remains part of the enduring attraction of this song in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, especially for neo-Confederates and Same Cause adherents. These constituencies see the defeat of the Confederacy as the beginning of cultural imperialism and what they perceive as threats to ethnicized southern whiteness. Specifically, this chapter suggests that the Internet functions as a consequence-free environment for whites to join the rhetoric and images of the Confederacy with conceptions of ethnicized whiteness, informing performances of oppression that dangerously belies the inherent privileges conferred to them by their skin color. Building on the work of Euan Hague and Edward Sebesta concerning the historical and intellectual roots of ethnicized southern whiteness, the analysis moves to cultural expressions that act as defenses against this perceived threat on white southern identity. The study will then link the language of these neo-Confederates and their sympathizers to conservative political trends, like the Tea Party, that promote agendas of states’ rights, class hierarchy, and vitriolic individualism. Establishing the perception of southern whiteness as a distinct identity perpetually under attack will demonstrate why the “Good Old Rebel” repeatedly functions as a totemic image for the unreconstructed southerner in the Internet age and its damaging influence on Civil War memory.

Southern Whiteness as an Ethnicity

Unreconstructed southerners have long strived for the South to maintain a separate identity from the rest of the nation. Members of this ideological camp view themselves as part of

a continuum of resistance that, at least since 1861, has continually fought cultural, if not political, colonization from the North and beyond. In the current political climate of the early twenty-first century, neo-Confederate groups like the League of the South, the Sons of Confederate Veterans, and the Southern Nationalist Network most conspicuously sustain this fight, as leaders of these organizations insist on the existence of differences between the North and the South. Often, a questionable belief in southern whiteness as an ethnicity informs the arguments of these organizations. Like a rejuvenation of Frost's "Contemporary Ancestors" argument or a radicalization of the folkloric paradigm's fascination with the rural South, these neo-Confederates position white southerners as the embodiment of traditional cultures from the British Isles, alive in the present, and persisting as a separate culture from the rest of the United States. The League of the South especially prides itself in this ostensible distinctiveness and has even created a "Traditional Southern Orthography," a system that appears identical to the rules of British English. A link from the main menu, titled "Spelling On This Website," explains that "For cultural distinctiveness the LS eschews the use of Webster's so-called 'American' English orthography which actually is nothing more than a bastardisation of the proper and correct English language by New England busybodies. Whenever possible, we prefer to use the more traditional, antebellum Southern English orthography." Continuing with its confrontational tone, the site asserts, "This is why you'll see words like 'colour' and 'organisation' throughout DixieNet instead of the spellings you were taught in school." One may then follow a link to seven lessons in "Verbal Independence" designed by Dr. James Everett Kibler, Jr., the League of the South's Cultural Chairman.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ "A Word about Traditional Southern Orthography: Why Southern Traditionalists Reject the Webster's Spelling Standard," League of the South, accessed March 11, 2013, <http://dixienet.org/rights/verbal.shtml>.

Euan Hague and Edward Sebesta deconstruct the neo-Confederate argument for southern whiteness as an ethnicity. These authors argue that ethnicity fails to register as an inherent biological trait, but “in reality” is “often selected by people from a multiplicity of possibilities based on differing circumstances.” Continuing, they state, “this flexibility of ethnicity allows a person to choose to invoke their ethnic identity as, when, and how it is needed.”¹⁷⁴ Hague and Sebesta trace the roots of this trend from the mid 1970s to the late 1980s. In an indictment of the academy for the conflation of biology and culture, these scholars note that during this time “a series of scholarly studies ‘ethnicized’ white southern identity past and present as Celtic.”¹⁷⁵ So, to meet the perceived threat of multiculturalism and political correctness, neo-Confederates of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries turned southern whiteness into an ethnicity, loosely defined as “Celtic,” that claimed roots in the politically and culturally suppressed peoples of the British Isles.

Hague and Sebesta note that the connection between the South and Celtic cultures stands largely based on the “Celtic interpretation of southern history” as proposed by historians Grady McWhiney and Forrest McDonald that culminated with their 1988 publication, *Cracker Culture*. This work posits

that fundamental and lasting divisions between Southerners and Northerners began in colonial America when migrants from the Celtic regions of the British Isles . . . managed to implant their traditional customs in the Old South . . . [T]hese people and their descendants swept westward decade after decade throughout the antebellum period until they had established themselves and their

¹⁷⁴ Euan Hague and Edward H. Sebesta, “Neo-Confederacy, Culture, and Ethnicity: A White Anglo-Celtic Southern People,” in *Neo-Confederacy: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Euan Hague, Heidi Beirich, and Edward H. Sebesta, foreword by James W. Loewen (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 97.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

anti-English values and practices across the Old South. By 1860 they far outnumbered the combined total of all other white Southerners and their culture dominated the region.¹⁷⁶

The authors then argue that descendants of English, German, and Dutch settled in the North, creating a lasting and real division between the two sections of the country, which they ground in terms of ethnic distinctions. The white southern descendants of Celts in *Cracker Culture* appear hot-tempered, violent, jealous, chivalric, blindingly individualistic, and prone to alcohol abuse. For McWhiney and McDonald, these ethnic traits prompted the South to secede, caused the Civil War, and evince the continuing cultural and ethnic variances between northern whites of English descent and white southerners of Celtic descent. This characterization works well for neo-Confederates seeking justification for secession, and later, racial violence. Should criticism of their beliefs arise, neo-Confederates familiar with this Celtic thesis can justify his/her behavior by way of biology, naturalizing racism and sectionalism through the excuse of bloodlines. Such an ideology also positions neo-Confederates in an imagined state of oppression in need of defense from the “Good Old Rebel.” After all, even Fuller’s unreconstructed O’Meara spoke with an Irish accent.

McWhiney arrived at his thesis largely by cataloguing the surnames of immigrants to the South in the colonial period, a seemingly innocuous methodology, and it remains true that a majority of poor whites in the antebellum South were either immigrants from or descendants of immigrants from the British Isles.¹⁷⁷ The problem arises when his analysis begins to inform notions of white supremacy. In essence, even if the conclusions drawn in *Cracker Culture* appear innocent, this “Celtic interpretation” continues to shape the rhetoric and ideology of neo-

¹⁷⁶ Grady McWhiney, *Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South*, with a foreword by Forrest McDonald (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988), xxi, xiii.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

Confederates, who argue that these bloodlines have remained unchanged since the seventeenth century. Perhaps unsurprisingly, McWhiney went on to co-found the League of the South with former student and one author of the “New Dixie Manifesto,” Michael Hill, who continues the organization today.¹⁷⁸ In the tradition of his mentor’s scholarship, Hill promotes himself as a “Celtic historian” and offered his books *Celtic Warfare, 1595 - 1763* and *Fire and Sword: Sorley Boy McDonnell and the Rise of Clan Ian Mor, 1538 - 1590* in editions of the League of the South’s newsletter, *Southern Patriot*.¹⁷⁹

Tracing the genealogy of the South writ large to one specific type of white identity dangerously conflates many cultural differences, creating a definition of southern identity that excludes all those outside of Celtic, most conspicuously African Americans. As Hague and Sebesta claim, this conflation “enables discussions of race that are euphemistically articulated in terms of culture and community, precisely the strategy that neo-Confederates utilize.” To prove this point, these authors cite the words of Michael Hill, who has stated, “when I think of Southerners, I think about our origins in the organic, kin-based societies of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.” Hill reiterated this racist and xenophobic interpretation of southern identity in his comments on African Americans, claiming he accepted their residence in the contemporary U. S. South, as long as they “come down here and live as Southerners.”¹⁸⁰ In these statements, Hill conflates region and race, as well as race and ethnicity, in an attempt to disregard the centrality of African American contributions to the creation of southern culture. Furthermore, by claiming that southern identity maintains roots exclusive to Celtic people imbues cultural products with

¹⁷⁸ Douglas Martin, “Grady McWhiney, 77 Historian of ‘Celtic’ South, Dies,” *The New York Times*, April 30, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/30/us/30mcwhiney.html?_r=0.

¹⁷⁹ *Southern Patriot* 2, no. 1 (January/February 2008): 11, accessed March 13, 2013, <http://dixienet.org/rights/southernpatriot/spjanfeb08.pdf>.

¹⁸⁰ Hague and Sebesta, “Neo-Confederacy, Culture, and Ethnicity,” *Neo-Confederacy*, 103, 101, 102.

biological determinism, as if southern culture stands definable through one genealogical lens, drawn from the ostensibly pure bloodlines from the British Isles.

Hague and Sebesta assert that neo-Confederate writers suggest “the transmission, in tact, of supposedly consistent Celtic behaviors to (white) Southerners throughout history implies they must comprise the basis for current cultural practices.” They continue by offering an example of this allegedly consistent cultural production from McWhiney and McDonald, who argue that the aural similarities between bagpipes and fiddles evinces the connections between Celtic and U. S. southern cultures.¹⁸¹ Much like the census data that spawned the Celtic interpretation, the validity of such an assertion as the fiddle/bagpipe correlation appears insignificant on its face. But when internalized and biologized, even aural tones risk reinforcing notions of white supremacy by making southern culture a homogenous, white phenomenon.

Less innocuously, Michael Hill has expressed his beliefs in the Celtic/southern cultural connections within a call for war. At the League of the South National Conference on July 30, 2011 in Abbeville, South Carolina, Hill delivered an address titled “What Would It Take To Get You To Fight?” Beginning with that question, Hill continued, “I’m not speaking figuratively but literally. What would it take to turn you into a William Wallace or a Robert Bruce, an Issac [*sic*] Shelby or a Francis Marion, a Bedford Forrest or a John Pelham, a Michael Collins or a Tom Barry?” As president of the organization and a “Celtic” historian, Hill used his position of authority to describe a genealogy of resistance and readiness to die for one’s causes, which he delineates from Scotland to the Confederacy to the Irish Republican Army, implying a cultural and biological trans-Atlantic link in the process. Hill continued by racializing his argument and drawing connections between the civil rights era and the election of Barack Obama. In his view, if white southerners had only produced

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 105.

real leaders of the people there would have been no second reconstruction known as the civil rights movement. Nor would there have been a Republican Party take-over of Dixie beginning in the 1960s. Nor would we have become a tame and servile economic colony to the interests of international business and banking . . . we must do as the Scottish people threatened to do in the 14th century—we must look to ourselves alone and what resources we can muster at the late and perilous hour . . . Though I do tend toward hyperbole from time to time, I am not exaggerating now. Things may seem normal to some degree, but they are not. Since the fall of 2008, we have been robbed, and not just we who are alive today but our children, grandchildren, and generations of Southerners yet unborn.¹⁸²

Understanding the trajectory of ethnicity as a social scientific term helps to deconstruct neo-Confederate usage of the concept. Historian Henry Yu charts the problematic career of ethnicity beginning in the early twentieth century. He notes that Franz Boas and others taught “that cultural characteristics were the most interesting social phenomena for study” and that “any attention to physical characteristics was intellectually inappropriate. Attacking justifications for racial hierarchy grounded in biology, social scientists used the concept of ethnicity as a weapon against racial thinking.” However, as “European immigrants were transformed into white ethnics in the mid-twentieth century,” ethnicity often functioned as a way to transmit white privilege onto historically non-white groups, while maintaining a racial hierarchy that excluded people of color, namely African Americans in the South.¹⁸³

¹⁸² Michael Hill, “What Would It Take To Get You To Fight?,” Presented on July 30, 2011 at The League of the South National Conference in Abbeville, South Carolina, accessed March 20, 2013, http://dixienet.org/rights/what_would_it_take_to_get_you_to_fight.php.

¹⁸³ Henry Yu, “Ethnicity,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Bergett and Glenn Hendler (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007), 104, 107-108.

In her study of late twentieth century white suburbanites, sociologist Mary C. Waters argues, like Yu, that ethnicity holds a flexible and subjective quality that her respondents could claim or ignore based on the situation, a privilege unavailable to African, Asian, and Hispanic Americans. This type of self-identification constitutes what she calls a symbolic ethnicity that she found most often based on four common characteristics: “knowledge about ancestors, surname, looks, and the relative rankings of the groups.”¹⁸⁴ Commenting on the flexibility of ethnicity, Waters cites comparisons between the 1970 and 1980 census surveys in which white respondents altered their ethnic alignments, demonstrating “that a portion of the population simplify or change their ancestry responses in their own lifetimes, a finding that challenges one of our commonly held beliefs about ethnicity - that it is a physical or permanent aspect of oneself.” Much like identification with the “Good Old Rebel” and other unreconstructed structures of feeling, Waters claims, ethnicity provides “a backup nationality in case they should ever want an ‘escape hatch’ from being an American.”¹⁸⁵ She suggests that the balancing between identities as a U. S. citizen with belonging to a symbolic ethnicity creates a paradox for white suburbanites of the late twentieth century, citing the common American “quest for community on the one hand and a desire for individuality on the other” as one source for this contradictory sense of belonging. She references Tocqueville’s observation and coinage of U. S. individualism and claims that symbolic ethnicity bridges the simultaneous needs to feel “both special and simultaneously part of a community. It is something that comes to you involuntarily through heredity, and at the same time it is a personal choice.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), 7, 57.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 36, 56.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 147, 150.

Another reason for this paradoxical position stems from the alignment of symbolic ethnicities with racism in the U. S., especially in reaction to the black power movement of the 1970s. As a generation of white ethnics, reared on their parents and grandparents' stories of ethnic ghettos and discrimination, embraced the political and social privileges of whiteness, they projected their ability to segue out of a minority status onto other ethnicities and races.¹⁸⁷ Waters's white respondents preferred to view their own rise in terms of meritocratic achievement rather than the whitening effects of time, educational opportunities, intermarriage, and the benefits of skin color. She summarizes this point by stating, "if your own ethnicity is a voluntaristic personal matter it is sometimes difficult to understand that race or ethnicity for others is influenced by societal and political components."¹⁸⁸

This emphasis on the power of the individual to overcome social and economic obstacles in spite of institutional racism lies at the center of what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and others deem as color-blind racism. Bonilla-Silva defines four frames of color-blind racism as "abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism."¹⁸⁹ For the white ethnics of Waters's work, abstract liberalism gives whites the psychological tools to construct a mirage of meritocracy in the U. S. In short, if ethnicized whites can assimilate to middle class respectability, then people of color should take advantage of the free market of achievement, despite political and economic systems structured against them. This logic holds special appeal to neo-Confederates who have internalized the idea of ethnicized southern whiteness and feel themselves oppressed for their cultural heritage yet benefit from the privileges of their skin color.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 147, 161.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 164.

¹⁸⁹ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, and Oxford: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 26.

Sociologist Amy E. Ansell writes that new rightists in the late 1980s and early 1990s were fond of pointing to high rates of crime and low rates of education in African American communities “without relating such patterns to material circumstances, the objective opportunity structure, or the continued reality of institutional racism.” Like Bonilla-Silva, she relates this to the rhetoric of individualism espoused by neo-conservatives, suggesting that “through the symbolic construction of individual blame and responsibility, the key category of individualism enables the new right to oppose affirmative action and other items on the black agenda without appearing to be mean-spirited racists.”¹⁹⁰ As a result, the new rightists of the late twentieth century could insist on a social consciousness that exalted individual merit over race-based entitlements. Ansell goes on to tie this privileging of individualism to Rush Limbaugh and the “new right’s brand of anti-anti-racism,” which “has allowed conservatives to claim moral authority on the subject of civil rights and to bash the Democrats as racists because they are race-conscious.”¹⁹¹ With an ethnicity that they may choose to privilege or neglect, combined with nationalistic notions of individualism, neo-Confederates have formed new structures of feeling that asserts the supremacy of whiteness while couching their argument in terms of biology and culture.

Neo-Confederates also offer evidence of these structures in what Yu calls the “commercialization of ethnicity.” Like the rise of the ethnicized whiteness, Yu places the rise of this commercialization in the 1970s, when white ethnics “could embrace signs of their own ethnicity without fear of exclusion from the privileges of whiteness.” In this way, “white ethnics drew upon a history as victims of discrimination in ways that attenuated their own enjoyment of

¹⁹⁰ Amy E. Ansell, “The New Face of Race: The Metamorphosis of Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era America,” in *Multiculturalism in the United States: Current Issues, Contemporary Voices*, ed. Peter Kivisto and Georganne Rundblad (Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, A Sage Publications Company, 2000), 37.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

the privileges of being white, even as it evoked parallels to the historical suffering of nonwhites.”¹⁹² Hague and Sebesta mention that the *Southern Patriot*, the newsletter of the League of the South, unsurprisingly recommended the movie *Braveheart* upon its release in 1995, believing that “unreconstructed Southerners will find it difficult to miss the parallels between the Scots and our Confederate forebearers.”¹⁹³ By no coincidence, Trent Lott, a Mississippi Senator with well-documented neo-Confederate ties, declared a National Tartan Day in 1998 on the heels of *Braveheart* and arguably with the intent of codifying southern white ethnicity.¹⁹⁴

This fetishization of whiteness finds precedent in earlier works. As outlined above, a faction of the antebellum white South held a fascination with the works of Sir Walter Scott, claiming an ancestral, and therefore, biological link to the English fighting heroes of *Ivanhoe* and *Waverly* and even supplied the “Good Old Rebel” with the alternative, gentrifying title “The Lay of the Last Rebel.” This chivalric, cavalier version of southern whiteness held notions of aristocracy that were untenable for even the most aspirational of poor whites in the rural South. Much like the folkloric paradigm, an idealization of the white southern yeoman farmer emerged in the early twentieth century from the Nashville Agrarians, largely in response to the drastic changes of modernity. As historian James Cobb notes, the Agrarians stood “less intent on defending agrarianism or even deriding industrialism than on inciting their fellow white southerners to rise in revolt against what they saw as the ongoing New South effort to Northernize their economy and society, and thereby, destroy their regional identity.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Yu, “Ethnicity,” *Keywords*, 107.

¹⁹³ Hague and Sebesta, “Culture and Ethnicity,” *Neo-Confederacy*, 107.

¹⁹⁴ Cobb, *Away Down South*, 331.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 116.

Like Donald Davidson in the previous chapter, fellow Agrarian John Crowe Ransom bemoaned the passing of the “unreconstructed Southerner.” While he did not use the term ethnicity in his romantic vision of common southern whites, Ransom’s contribution to *I’ll Take My Stand*, “Reconstructed But Unregenerate,” provides a blueprint for the conflation of race and region that neo-Confederates proclaim today. Writing in 1930, Ransom believed the South should assume “a position in the Union analogous more or less to the position of Scotland under the British crown - a section with a very local and peculiar culture that would, nevertheless, be secure and respected.” In this subjugated position, Ransom suggests that the common white southerner “is punished as his crime deserves. He feels himself in the American scene as an anachronism.”¹⁹⁶ Here, he assumes the language of victimization that prefigures the white ethnocentrism of neo-Confederates who adopt the position of a minority under attack from northern, global, and nonwhite constituencies.

Ransom even heralded the South’s obstinacy towards industrialization as a redeeming trait, indicative of the common white southerner. In a passage that might easily describe the cover art to the “Good Old Rebel” sheet music, Ransom depicts the idealized white southerner, asserting, “In the country districts great numbers of these broken-down Southerners are still to be seen in patched blue-jeans, sitting on ancestral fences, shotguns across their laps and hound-dogs at their feet.” Ransom suggests that this way of life stands unchanged, and therefore, “pure” since the immigration of the South’s ancestors. With this notion of purity, Ransom’s argument attaches southerners with an association to godliness, spirituality, and closeness to nature that posits the white South as a redemptive force in modern society. Ransom recognizes the inevitability of some change to his romanticized region, but warns, “the South at last is to be

¹⁹⁶ John Crowe Ransom, “Reconstructed But Unregenerate,” in *Twelve Southerners, I’ll Take My Stand* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962), 24, 1.

physically reconstructed; but it will be fatal if the South should conceive it as her duty to be regenerated and get her spirit reborn with a totally different orientation toward life.” He then advises, “the new so-called industrial ‘slavery’ fastens not only upon the poor, but upon the middle and better classes of society, too.”¹⁹⁷ In short, white southerners of all classes may ultimately assume positions little better than slaves to industry if “unregenerate Southerners” do not meet the northernized, New South forces of commerce and development with a spiritual/intellectual secession and cling to the agrarian way of life.

Sociologist John Shelton Reed writes of finding inspiration in Ransom’s treatise on southern whiteness and generated an array of books in the 1970s and 1980s, portraying southern identity as an ethnicity that may soon face extinction. In his essay “The Same Old *Stand?*,” a thinly-veiled biographical account, Reed tells of reading Ransom and the rest of the Agrarians while a college student in Massachusetts in 1963, remembering “For someone who felt moved to defend the South, this fire-eating counterattack was a revelation.” As for his northern classmates who might pin the sins of Jim Crow on him, he relays that for most white southerners “race was simply *not very important*,” a convenient statement for someone in the position of privilege.¹⁹⁸ He then explains, in the third-person, how contact with other nationalities and ethnicities shaped his early conceptions of southern culture and its relationship to the past, stating,

Clearly, his Jewish friends had no more to do with the *shtetl* than he had to do with sharecropping. The Troubles were no more an ever-present burden to his Irish friends than Reconstruction was to him. His FORGET, HELL! Cigarette lighter had about the same historical significance as a KISS ME - I’M ITALIAN button. It became evident, to him at least, that ethnicity as he came to know it in

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 16, 22, 23.

¹⁹⁸ John Shelton Reed, *One South: An Ethnic Approach to Regional Culture* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 165.

New York was an American creation, and a recent one. Group identity had been forged . . . and its relation to the group's actual history . . . was very tenuous.¹⁹⁹

While Reed admits that white ethnicities seemed like social constructions, he uses this conviction to sanitize southern history and wash southern whiteness of any guilt rather than to deconstruct whiteness. Reed essentially argues that if other people that look white can declare themselves a minority group that deserves special attention, then white southerners can assert the same thing. His comparing the plight of white southerners in Reconstruction to ethnic cleansing belittles those Europeans who may hold an actual claim to the term ethnicity. Furthermore, saying that race was not important, even with the caveat of his white perspective, belies the violent history of white southern identity. He betrays these prejudices again when discussing what he considers the distinctively southern trait of deep individualism. Concerning African Americans and this characteristic, Reed notes, "Southern blacks adopted the same stance, as soon as they were able. It is significant that after 1865 the new freed men widely refused to work in gangs under supervision and forced Southern landowners to turn to a sharecropping system."²⁰⁰ In his opinion, emancipated slaves absorbed just enough whiteness to create a nuisance for "Southern" (read white) landowners, and African Americans have no one but themselves to blame for the generations that endured exploitation trapped in the sharecropping system. Again, these types of statements show Reed harbors distinct attachments to his whiteness and the privileges it confers on his worldview, as well as covert racism that he couches in terms of academia. Reed certainly leveled his own criticisms of the Agrarians. Yet even in his critiques, his analysis remains tempered by presumptions of white southern distinctiveness and superiority. By 1993, *The New York Times*' Peter Applebome, likely aware of the song, dubbed Reed the

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 168.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 171.

“Good Old Rebel” and documented his interest in watching voters grapple with “housebroken Southerners,” Bill Clinton and Al Gore. Even as Reed appeared somewhat saddened by Bill Clinton’s embodiment of the “glad-handing, country-club yuppie Southerner,” he contends that the South, at least the white version, had yet to lose its “fundamental distinctiveness.”²⁰¹

From McWhiney and Hill to Ransom and Reed, a common thread emerges, which situates “authentic” white southerners as the possessors of a unique identity that stands unadulterated and immemorial. The root problem with this conception of southern identity lies in the failure to see the creation of cultures as ever-evolving, fluid, and dialectical processes. This notion of identity stands antithetical to what Albert Murray’s calls the “incontestably mulatto” nature of U. S. society.²⁰² Instead, defenders of white southern distinctiveness hold culture to Arnoldian standards that presume definable levels of authenticity, stability, and hierarchy. This worldview engenders a feeling of defensiveness, as if authentic cultures were under attack in the postmodern, post-race, post-South age. Within this context, the “Good Old Rebel” presents an attractive image of resistance for prescribers to this feeling.

From Ethnic to Cyber Rebels

Since its first recording in 1942, the “Good Old Rebel” has found adoption throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The outlaw country and southern rock genres of the late 1970s and early 1980s brought on a slew of artists that channeled the “Good Old Rebel” in sentiment and sometimes in name. If not the “Good Old Rebel,” then the good ol’ boy, an often-sanitized depiction of the poor white southerner, came to pervade these musical genres and their related pop culture offspring. From Willie and Waylon to Bo and Luke, the

²⁰¹ Peter Applebome, “Conversations/John Shelton Reed; Lamentations of a Good Old Rebel: The South Is Losing Its Accent,” *The New York Times*, January 24, 1993.

²⁰² Albert Murray, *The Omni-Americans: Some Alternatives to the Folklore of White Supremacy* (New York: De Capo Press, 1970), 22.

lovable outlaw, empathetic and misunderstood in his defiance, captured the imaginations of audiences like “modern day Robin Hoods” and rode the broader wave of U. S. fascination with the rural white South in the post-Vietnam era.²⁰³

In the midst of interest in this topic, MGM released Walter Hill’s 1980 film *The Long Riders*, a reimagining of Jesse James and the James/Younger gang that robbed banks and trains in the 1860s and 1870s as retribution against the Union victory in the Civil War. The film stars brothers David, Keith, and Robert Carradine, James and Stacy Keach, Randy and Dennis Quaid, and Christopher and Nicholas Guest as the Younger, James, Miller, and Ford brothers, respectively. Multi-instrumentalist and genre-blending artist Ry Cooder composed and arranged the soundtrack, which features originals, as well as period songs, including “I’m a Good Old Rebel.” The soundtrack lists the tune as a traditional, indicating that Cooder took the “Good Old Rebel” as a typical folk song of anonymous origin. Its placement in the film also relays the meaning of the song for director Walter Hill. After the gang’s first bank robbery of the film, the men retire to a saloon to gamble and hire prostitutes. A live string band provides the musical entertainment, performing their repertoire of period songs. While playing the pro-Union version of the song “Battle Cry of Freedom,” gang member and Confederate veteran Clell Miller, portrayed by Randy Quaid, stops the performance at gunpoint to curse the Yankee song and request “I’m a Good Old Rebel” in its stead, which suits the southern gang of outlaws. The song makes a brief return near the end of the film after the gang’s failed robbery attempt of a bank in Northfield, Minnesota. Tipped about the coming raid, the Northfield townspeople lay in wait for the gang, ambushing them as they retreat from their unsuccessful attempt at emptying the bank’s

²⁰³ For the most recognizable example of this song trend and the source of the quotation, see Waylon Jennings, “Theme from the Dukes of Hazzard (Good Ol’ Boys),” *Music Man*, RCA, 1980, 33 1/3 rpm. On the South and U. S. dynamic, see Peter Applebome, *Dixie Rising: How the South Is Shaping American Values, Politics, and Culture* (New York: Times Books, a division of Random House, Inc., 1996); Reed, *Whistling Dixie*.

safe. As the gang rides to safety in the Minnesota countryside, many members shot multiple times and hundreds of miles from their Missouri homes, a slow, wordless version of the “Good Old Rebel” plays with mournful tone, seeming to ask if all the rebellion and obstinacy is worth the lives of the young men.²⁰⁴

Hill’s use of the “Good Old Rebel” in these scenes adds a significant weight to the moral scales of the film and holds important implications for issues of Civil War memory. In the first instance, Miller’s threatening insistence that the string band play the song signals to the viewer the true unreconstructed intentions of the James/Younger gang. Historian and James biographer T. J. Stiles posits that far from the de-racialized Robin Hood of popular folklore, James and his band of brothers represented “a major force in the attempt to create a Confederate identity for Missouri.” Stiles goes so far as to categorize the gang’s actions as domestic terrorism that warrant consideration in the same breath with the Ku Klux Klan.²⁰⁵ Both Frank and Jesse James, who hailed from a slave holding family with a fire-eating mother, actively rode with the Missouri Confederate guerilla forces led by William Quantrill and Bloody Bill Anderson, both of whom gained renown for their politically and racially motivated butchery during the war. The vitriol of the “Good Old Rebel” within the saloon scene reveals the gang’s status as unreconstructed defenders of the defeated Confederacy. As soldiers of the Same Cause, the James/Younger gang embodied the sentiment of the “Good Old Rebel,” making the song the perfect accompaniment for their attitudes. However, by never addressing the issue of slavery or postwar racial violence, the film sanitizes the historical narrative for consumers in the present, ridding the Civil War and Reconstruction of their racial and political consequences.

²⁰⁴ *The Long Riders*, directed by Walter Hill (1980; Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, Inc. and MGM Home Entertainment, Inc., 2001). For the music, see Ry Cooder, *The Long Riders, Original Sound Track*, Warner Brothers/WEA International, 1997, CD.

²⁰⁵ T. J. Stiles, *Jesse James: Last Rebel of the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 6.

The presentation of the “Good Old Rebel” as an accurate and perpetual representation of white southern sentiment finds appropriation across popular culture mediums. Most recently, the unreconstructed southerner, as emblemized in the “Good Old Rebel” song, functions as a soldier in this culture war that has spilled over into a cyber front, and the Internet presents great promise for adherents to the “Good Old Rebel” sentiment. Through the creation of websites and YouTube videos, cyberspace permits a multitude of disseminating paths for this song and its sentiment, shrouding its progenitors in veils of anonymity whenever needed. In *Cities of the Dead*, Joseph Roach discusses a concept he terms “vortices of behavior.” Vortices of behavior represent the place in which geography and historical memory collide to allow a locale for the performance of cultural identities. Roach coins this phrase to provide a vocabulary that might usefully describe the actual physical spaces in which identities are performed. These spaces range from theatrical stages to city streets. For Roach, vortices of behavior relate to Lacan’s ludic spaces, or areas in which inhibitions dissipate and Rabelaisian behaviors emerge.²⁰⁶ The present study suggests that the Internet offers evidence of a virtual vortex of behavior. In lieu of an actual physical space for the performance of postmodern identities, the Internet creates a region-less space that, nevertheless, holds the potential to create a platform in which cultural memory is transmitted and performed. For these reasons, the use of the “Good Old Rebel” on the Internet holds tremendous potential for a critical analysis of its meanings to its proponents in the era of new media.

As a faction of white southerners imagine their ethnicity under attack, they seek defenders, and the song and sentiment of “Good Old Rebel” fulfills that role as the idealized incarnation of the unreconstructed southerner in popular culture. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a

²⁰⁶ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 26-28.

website called “Good Old Rebel” proclaims its engagement in this culture war by way of its subheading, “Defending our Southern Heritage and Celebrating Confederate History.”²⁰⁷ Interestingly, the designer of the page chose the collective pronoun “our” to describe his/her version of “Southern Heritage.” Hague and Sebesta note this language of camaraderie appears in an array of neo-Confederate speech and publications. These authors suggest that neo-Confederate leaders use “nationalist rhetoric to generate audience empathy and a sense of solidarity,” tying this strategy to Michael Billig’s term *deixis*, “which uses pronouns like ‘we,’ ‘our,’ and ‘us’ to build a sense of commonality.”²⁰⁸ Billig specifically calls this insidious linguistic strategy, “the *deixis* of homeland,” believing it “can do its business unobtrusively, running up the flag so discreetly that it is unnoticed even by the speaker or writer.”²⁰⁹ In this case, the flag raised represents one of racial and political solidarity. Furthermore, this subheading warrants questioning concerning what “our” and “heritage” mean and which version of Confederate history stands as acceptable to those included in “our.”

This manipulation of semantics allows embittered white southerners to name the thing that cannot be named, in this case whiteness, in what they feel is a repressive culture of homogeneity. In his work *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes offers ideas applicable for decoding neo-Confederate semiology and language. For Barthes, “semiology has taught us that myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal.” In an especially apropos argument for the present study, Barthes states that in myths “things lose the memory that they once were made” and are masked by what he terms

²⁰⁷ Good Old Rebel: Defending Our Southern Heritage and Celebrating Confederate History, accessed January 20, 2013, <http://goodoldrebel.com>.

²⁰⁸ Hague and Sebesta, “Culture and Ethnicity,” *Neo-Confederacy*, 100.

²⁰⁹ Michael Billings, *Banal Nationalism* (London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, Ltd., 1995), 107.

*“depoliticized speech.”*²¹⁰ The “heritage” expressed by the “Good Old Rebel” displays the contemporary unreconstructed southerner’s endeavor to mythologize, and therefore depoliticize, the Confederacy in hopes of expressing race, specifically whiteness, without having to say it. Likewise, this site’s author attempts to deflect accusations of racism by adding the statement, “GoodOldRebel.com does not condone bigotry in any form!”²¹¹ Similar to the white southern/Celtic ethnicity rubric, such an announcement finds justification by obscuring the privileges of whiteness and anticipating a likely critique by those who see beyond the depoliticized speech. Yet a critical analysis of this position must assume that the author of these words seriously believes this declaration, demonstrating the extreme extent to which those that adhere to the “Good Old Rebel” mentality have internalized the feeling of victimization.

The “Good Old Rebel” site divides its posts into the categories of “Battlefield Preservation,” “Confederate History,” “Heritage Defense,” “Reenacting,” “Southern Heritage,” and “States Rights.” With twenty-five posts the “Heritage Defense” category garners the most attention by the author/authors, or at least provides insight into how they perceive their mission, as defenders of a threatened people. One post in this category offers an example of the “Good Old Rebel” site’s attempt to dismiss potential accusations of racism with a link to a documentary called “Behind the Dixie Stars.” This short film asserts that the Confederate battle flag has suffered an injustice through its representation as an emblem of racism. To this end, the film submits that the Confederacy never fought for the preservation of slavery, therefore, the flag cannot truthfully represent such a cause. The film’s argument hinges on interview clips with Nelson W. Winbush, an African American man and member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV). Winbush states that he joined the SCV in reaction to what he perceived as a

²¹⁰ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, sel. and trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 142, 143.

²¹¹ Good Old Rebel, accessed January 20, 2013, <http://goodoldrebel.com>.

war on Confederate memory by the NAACP, a threat that he took personally as a descendant of an African American Confederate soldier who rode with Nathan Bedford Forrest. Such testimony, as true as it may remain, fails to assuage damage rendered through hundreds of years of African American slavery in the United States before the Civil War and the role of the Confederacy in defending that practice. This video also fails to address the overwhelming significance of slavery to the cause of the war, as stated in the ordinances of secession by each Confederate state. Instead, this one man's testimony supposedly stands as a rebuttal to all those factors. Vindicated by the exception to the rule, the goodoldrebel.com author declares, "The video . . . addresses the fact that black soldiers indeed served in the Confederate Army and were also slaveholders. Great video!"²¹²

The goodoldrebel.com's mission statement holds evidence of the unreconstructed mindset that claims no racial bias. It reads,

This website was created in January of 2009 to serve as a place to promote the preservation of our Southern Heritage and to educate the public regarding all aspects of Confederate History. This site is in no way associated with any hate groups and thoroughly condemns [*sic*] their use of Confederate imagery to promote racism and intolerance. The posting of racist or hateful remarks on this site is prohibited. Any user that attempts to do so will be banned from the site immediately. I sincerely hope you enjoy your visit and will check back often as I hope this will become a lively place.²¹³

Again, this study does not question the intended sincerity of such a statement. However, the site's insistence on an unbiased perspective seems paradoxical considering its content and

²¹² "Behind the Dixie Stars," Good Old Rebel, accessed January 20, 2013, <http://goodoldrebel.com/behind-the-dixie-stars/>.

²¹³ "About GoodOldRebel.com," Good Old Rebel, accessed January 20, 2013, <http://goodoldrebel.com/about>.

knowing what the study at hand reveals about its namesake song. For instance, consider the cognitive dissonance that must exist for a site to claim no association with “hate groups” or “hateful remarks,” yet take its name from a song that “hates” a litany of founding documents of the United States and “would like to kill some mo’ ” Yankees. Such a mindset allows unreconstructed southerners to valorize the Confederacy and its symbols and divorce its legacy from ties to slavery and civil rights era violence.

The entirety of the site’s content does not fall so explicitly into this paradoxical category. For instance, a post from February 16, 2012 entitled “What did the Rebel Yell sound like? Here is the answer!” includes a link to a video, linked from *Smithsonian* magazine, of elderly Confederate veterans recreating the rebel yell in 1930. While this bit of documentary history provides a seemingly innocuous look into the past, the context of the website infuses this video with loaded meaning. To place this video within the “Good Old Rebel” agenda, the author of the post states, “I can only imagine how intimidating it would be to hear that sound in the face of an advancing Confederate regiment. No wonder there is documented proof of the Rebel yell causing Yankee units to route before they were even fired upon!”²¹⁴ Here, the site takes an educational tool provided by *Smithsonian* and rebrands it to emasculate Union soldiers, redirecting the sting of Confederate defeat for modern audiences.

Finding appropriation throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the unreconstructed sentiment maintains a presence in popular culture, yielding a number of recorded versions of the “Good Old Rebel” song by folk revivalists, Civil War living historians, and rock and roll artists.²¹⁵ While the recorded versions in their “brick and mortar” form remain important, the Internet allows an important window into the dialectics of culture creation, as the

²¹⁴ “What did the Rebel Yell sound like? Here is the answer!,” Good Old Rebel, accessed January 20, 2013, <http://goodoldrebel.com/what-did-the-rebel-yell-sound-like-here-is-the-answer/>.

²¹⁵ See Appendix for a partial discography.

distinctions between the producers and the consumers of popular culture blur to nearly unrecognizable degrees. Neo-Confederate organization the Southern Nationalist Network includes the “Good Old Rebel” on its page “The soundtrack of Southern revolution,” posted on August 31, 2011 by the driving force of the Network, Michael Cushman. Describing the list of songs, Cushman writes, “If the Southern revolution had a sound track what songs would be on it? This is the question recently posed to my Facebook friends. They helped in compiling the following list. Where possible, each song is linked so that you can make your own Southern revolution soundtrack!” The link to the “Good Old Rebel” directs the viewer to a YouTube video, created for an unidentified rendition of the song. Titled “I’M A GOOD OL’ REBEL - A Tribute To All the Johnny Rebels Out Their [*sic*] - FIRST WAR AGAINST TERRORISM,” viewing this video requires clicking a consent button, acknowledging the video’s images of Confederate battle flags and Ku Klux Klan memorabilia as “potentially offensive or inappropriate.”²¹⁶

Besides the Southern Nationalist Network’s link, at least 90 versions of the “Good Old Rebel” exist on YouTube as of April 2013, finding new life for this song through user-generated videos in the age of social media. Typically, these videos consist of montages, featuring Confederate battle flags, Confederate soldiers, and slow pans of Civil War-themed paintings. “Alexreb92” posted a characteristic video on September 27, 2007. This example displays pictures of Confederate flags superimposed with an American Indian, the “Don’t Tread on Me” serpent, and several reductive slogans of white, southern identity, like “100% Good Old Boy,”

²¹⁶ “I’M A GOOD OL’ REBEL - A Tribute To All The Johnny Rebels Out Their - FIRST WAR AGAINST TERRORISM,” YouTube Video, 4:22, posted by “PikeBishopM1911,” October 8, 2009, http://www.youtube.com/verify_controversy?next_url=/watch%3Fv%3DDoiLFRpWvQ0. Cushman maintains an intense presence on the Internet, from the Southern Nationalist Network site and Facebook page to his YouTube channel “RedShirtArmy.” For an example of the extent to which he has internalized the idea of ethnicized southern whiteness, see “Status Quo Conservatism & Southern Nationalism,” YouTube Video, 32:32, posted by “RedShirtArmy,” October 23, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7oMg41RUqY>. Here, Cushman claims that illegal immigration has led to the ethnic genocide of white southerners.

“I’d Rather Be Historically Accurate Than Politically Correct,” and the bumper sticker favorite, “Heritage Not Hate.”²¹⁷ When not performed live by the user, these videos generally feature the Hoyt Axton version of the “Good Old Rebel,” which he recorded for the 1991 album *Songs of the Civil War*. In the spirit of Ken Burns’s documentary *The Civil War*, *Songs of the Civil War* features an array of folk performers from Sweet Honey in the Rock to John Hartford and opens with “Ashokan Farewell,” the solemn fiddle tune that served as Burns’s theme. Axton’s “Good Old Rebel” eschews the minor keyed menacing tone of other recordings for a buoyant, major key march, complete with snare drum rolls and a chorus of well-harmonizing background singers.²¹⁸ Interestingly, confusion even surrounds the correct performer in this case, as many videos claim the singer as Johnny Rebel, a Ku Klux Klan-endorsed artist, who released a stream of racist singles beginning in the 1960s on the Reb Rebel label out of Crowley, Louisiana.²¹⁹

Two common, polarized themes clearly emerge from the comments posted by other YouTube users on the video posted by “AlexReb92.” The most prevalent neo-Confederate attitude was expressed by “DontTreadOnMe19D,” stating,

The Confederate flag, or should I say FLAGS, arent anti-American. They are anti-government. They stand for states rights, and individual “unalienable” rights. It is just as patriotic as “Old Glory.” To a Southerner such as myself It is a symbol of brave men who fought and died in a second war of independence. There is a great sense of pride, and of disdain, that is still apparent in the South.

On the other side of the debate, a YouTube user with the screen name “RonPaulHatesBlacks” asserted,

²¹⁷ “I’m a Good Old Rebel,” YouTube Video, 1:49, posted by “Alexreb92,” September 27, 2007, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAfHigPsC_s.

²¹⁸ *Songs of the Civil War*, various artists, Columbia Records CK-48607, 1991, CD.

²¹⁹ For more on Johnny Rebel, see Tosches, *Country*, 226-227.

Actually, the war was over slavery. The South proudly said so when they started it. You really shouldn't lecture us about the cause of the Civil War when you've never even read the South's own Cornerstone Speech or Mississippi, Texas, Georgia, or South Carolina declarations of secession that explicitly identify the cause of the war. The South's own declarations cited "slave" and "slavery" a whopping 82 times but "states rights" not even once.²²⁰

These opposing views suggest that the "Good Old Rebel" still holds a place in U. S. popular culture and some still cling to its sentiments as a sincere manifestation of particularly unreconstructed structures of feeling.

Like the earliest publications of the poem, these YouTube incarnations also stand ready to alter the name of Innes Randolph's creation. The two most popular videos, garnering a combined 2,522,540 views as of April 2013, list the title as "Confederate Anthem." With 1,326,456 views, YouTube user "cwil0060" offers a description of his video as a slide show of Confederate-themed images and that the song is actually Axton's version of "I'm a Good Old Rebel." Telling of the user's political stance, a quote from the tenth amendment to the Constitution follows, relaying that "cwil0660" sees the "Good Old Rebel" as an argument for states' rights.²²¹ The second most popular, with 1,196,084 views, misidentifies the performer as Johnny Rebel.²²² These videos evince the depth to which the "Good Old Rebel" finds internalization by its adherents, as YouTube users adopt the immediate postwar attitude, transporting it across one hundred and fifty years to express contemporary regional identity, and

²²⁰ "I'm a Good Old Rebel," YouTube Video, 1:49, posted by "Alexreb92," September 27, 2007, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAfhigPsC_s.

²²¹ "Confederate Anthem," YouTube Video, 1:44, posted by "cwil0660," July 11, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-iaqQ-mryg>.

²²² "Johnny Rebel - Confederate Anthem," YouTube Video, 1:49, posted by "AmericanZeus," September 3, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZYgXrUSjIs&bpctr=1358621352>.

creating a new structure of feeling in the process. The song remains the same, but this new life on the Internet creates an anonymous, consequence-free space where even those outside of the U. S. South may identify with or reject the “Good Old Rebel” sentiment.

Much like the secessionists of the 1860s, the U. S.’s current political climate has yielded a new movement that pits the general public or “common” Americans against the central government, an extension of the states’ rights argument to the level of the individual. Most notably, the Tea Party espouses this way of feeling, along with an acerbic claim on true patriotism as a means to voice an ultraconservative agenda of dissent. Interestingly, one such protester has reconfigured the “Good Old Rebel” to express this structure of feeling. Titled “I’m a Good Ole’ American (Anti-Obama Song),” user “piou” posted his reimagining of this song on August 30, 2009 with the description “A song written by a concerned, non-funded American Citizen in opposition to an ever-growing tyrannical government.” To date, this video has received 339,229 views with 2,763 comments, both sections doubling their numbers in the past nine months thanks to the presidential election and the recent gun control debate. The images that comprise this video alternate between portraits of the United States’ Founding Fathers and negative political cartoons that depict President Barack Obama as a socialist. One such image situates President Obama between pictures of Hitler and Lenin. Sung acapella to the tune of Hoyt Axton’s version of the “Good Old Rebel,” “piou” intones, “Now I’m a good ole American / Now that’s just what I am / And for the liberal nation / I do not give a damn / Don’t want to rise against her / But I’ll gather up my guns / My freedom won’t be taken / I’ll fight’em til I’ve won.”²²³

²²³ “I’m a Good Ole’ American (Anti-Obama Song),” YouTube Video, 1:50, posted by “piou,” August 30, 2009, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRtIU3OJ_c&feature=related.

Much like the “Good Old Rebel,” the “Good Ole’ American” relishes the thought of fighting the federal government in what he views as an infringement on personal liberty and states’ rights. The singer goes on to list the other entities he hates, such as social programs, the stimulus bill, and anything that he deems to resemble socialism. Many comments speak in favor of the video, displaying an array of reactionary and racist attitudes toward the president and his purported infringement of individual liberties and adding fodder to a new structure of feeling for another generation. This version has even garnered a reposting by an Internet protest site called “Americans Not Wanted,” who claim outrage at the Obama administration’s handling of the economy and illegal immigration. Reminiscent of Randolph’s dating of the “Good Old Rebel” on the second anniversary of Lee’s surrender, user “AmericansNotWanted” reposted “piou’s” video on September 11, 2012 as an overt reminder that the U. S. remains at war with an elusive, global enemy following the attacks of September 11, 2001.

These recent manifestations of the “Good Old Rebel” speak to the enduring appeal of this emblematic expression of recalcitrance and obstinacy towards authority, even as it assumes new roles for its adherents in new situations. YouTube videos and their respective comments sections allow a peek into some of the current ideological uses of Civil War imagery in the guise of history or memory. On the Internet, “Good Old Rebels” may perform contemporary expressions of unreconstructed, white, southern identity. Like the West and various imagined Souths before it, the Internet creates a postmodern region in which adherents to the “Good Old Rebel” create and define new structures of feeling using the tools popular culture and the protection of anonymity. In this way, popular culture functions as a repository for the “Good Old Rebel,” where it lies in wait of its next adoption, aiding in the expression of new, albeit familiar feelings of conservative white identity. Without dismantling and deconstructing the way the past is used,

we allow groups that cling to ideologies of inequality to control the historical narrative. To return to Nora, we allow the “appropriation and manipulation” of memory to construct structures of feeling that attract and bolster partisan conceptions of the past that inform political discourse in the present.²²⁴ In the case of the “Good Old Rebel,” those who cling to its messages of rebellion and hate freeze conceptions of southern whiteness in the aftermath of Confederate defeat, hindering their ability to see southern culture as an evolving and heterogeneous entity.

These efforts strive to naturalize and normalize a cultural construction of southern whiteness that forces all other races and ethnicities to appear as deviants from the norm. Anthropologist James Brow describes such developments as primordialization. Brow defines primordialization as “the process whereby certain kinds of communal relations are promoted and experienced as if they possessed an original and natural inevitability” and that “the most pervasive and forcefully propagated forms of contemporary primordialization are nationalism and ethnicism.”²²⁵ So, as neo-Confederates and their sympathizers perform versions of and displayed affiliations with the “Good Old Rebel,” they primordialize their ethnicized version of southern whiteness, creating a “naturalization of the arbitrary.”²²⁶ Using this theory, one sees how the repeated performance of the unreconstructed southerner normalizes this way of feeling white and southern. Tara McPherson pushes this critique even farther offering that “fetishizing ethnicity as a cover for whiteness is not enough,” but instead posits that “emotional defenses” of white southern identity represent an “attempt to carve out an embodied meaning for

²²⁴ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” *Realms of Memory: vol. 1*, 3.

²²⁵ James Brow, “Notes on Hegemony, Community, and the Uses of the Past,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 63, Issue 1 (January 1990): 1-6, *Religion and Philosophy Collection*, EBSCOhost, accessed May 8, 2012.

²²⁶ Ibid. For more on structuralism’s theories on ethnicity, see Gillian Bottomley, “Culture, Ethnicity and the Politics/Poetics of Representation,” *Journal of Sociology* 28, no. 2 (August 1992): 208-223; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

whiteness.”²²⁷ In this way, McPherson’s suggestion reinforces the idea of primordialization, as whiteness not only represents silent privilege but also the very thing on which the unreconstructed southern identity hinges.

Since its dissemination in the first years following the Civil War, the “Good Old Rebel” has represented the unreconstructed southerners’ structures of feeling. As this type of southerner views him/herself as a white ethnic whose culture has stood essentially unchanged for centuries, the “Good Old Rebel” song and sentiment on the Internet still represents an expression of that way of feeling in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, if unreconstructed southerners assert that their culture, as static, has always met authority with recalcitrance and obstinacy, then the “Good Old Rebel” makes the perfect totemic image for this performance of identity. Raymond Williams explains as much when he suggests that “the strongest barrier to the recognition of human cultural activity is this regular conversion of experience into finished products.”²²⁸ This statement relates well to the discussion at hand, since this song’s parodic roots have receded, allowing the song to emerge as a sincere expression of an unreconstructed southern identity. Since the “Good Old Rebel” has existed until now as a finished product without proper critique, then it appears in popular culture as an expression of a natural, primordial way of feeling beyond reproach. So, even as the reasons white southerners feel unreconstructed changes over time, the “Good Old Rebel” remains appealing as a totemic figure. This enduring attractiveness gives its proponents a sense of continuity with the past, which coupled with the notions of white/Celtic ethnicity, imbues their ideology with misplaced moral authority.

One of the more harmful effects of this conception of southern identity rests in its grab for the collective memory of the Civil War. This consideration necessitates a return to Nora’s

²²⁷ Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 112, 113.

²²⁸ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 128.

discussion of memory and to think of the “Good Old Rebel” in terms of *lieu de memoire*. Nora believes, “When certain minorities create protected enclaves as preserves of memory to be jealously safeguarded, they reveal what is true of all *lieux de memoire*: that without commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep them away.” He asserts that “the less memory is experienced from within, the greater its need for external props and tangible reminders of that which no longer exists except *qua* memory - hence the obsession with the archive . . . Remembering has become a matter of meticulously minute reconstruction.”²²⁹ In this way, the “Good Old Rebel” functions as a “prop” to remind unreconstructed southerners of their self-appointed minority status.

Identification with the “Good Old Rebel” places oneself in the position of a defender of this particular version of southern identity and the past. As Nora suggests, “for the individual, the discovery of roots, of ‘belonging’ to some group becomes the source of identity . . . Belonging, in turn, becomes a total commitment.” Part of this belonging means a duty to remembering what the group decides it means to belong. “In a sense, it is memory of memory itself. The psychologization of memory makes each individual feel that his or her salvation ultimately depends on discharging a debt that can never be repaid.”²³⁰ This sense of duty drives one to create websites devoted to “Defending our Southern Heritage” and create videos that romantically depict the Confederacy to the strains of “Good Old Rebel.” Like a guerilla historical commission, those who internalize the “Good Old Rebel” feel imbued with a mission to defend and honor a construction of southern whiteness that prohibits the evolution of that demographic. Or as Nora might say, to be a “Good Old Rebel” is to remember being a “Good Old Rebel.”

²²⁹ Nora, “Between History and Memory,” *Realms of Memory, Vol. I*, 7, 8.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

This song in its many incarnations facilitates the memory of unreconstructed southernness that might otherwise fade from existence. So much of this identity relies on a specific, fabricated version of the past that it takes propping up and constant reminding. From songs to bumper stickers, from Confederate poetry to YouTube videos, this specifically southern identity roots itself in mythologies of whiteness that obfuscate its own privilege and recast itself in what McPherson calls an “imaginary secession.”²³¹ Directly related, an edition of the League of the South’s newsletter, *Southern Patriot*, from 2008 posted a notice advertising a lecture on “Personal Secession” at the Tennessee Chapter meeting. According to the *Patriot*, the meeting addressed “various aspects of Personal Secession, including food, finances, education, and others.” In the same edition, League president Michael Hill argued that the organization had made great strides in advocating southern independence since its inception in 1994. Hill assessed the League’s successes, asking, “Do we have a free and independent South? Do we have political, economic, cultural, or social power in the South? The answer is, of course, no. But we have made progress.” In Hill’s estimation, the progress made included fewer League members in debt, the proliferation of their message of cultural supremacy, and the creation of a tight-knit community of fellow believers. Hill then makes an even more positive spin on the League’s impact, assuring his readers that

Better questions by far than the previous ones are: Have we conserved something?
Resurrected something? Taught something? Learned something? Served
someone? Loved someone? And the resounding answer to all of these questions
is a resounding ‘YES, we have!’ We have conserved our history, our stories . . .
The recovery of heritage has inspired our people to create books, poetry, songs,

²³¹ McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*, 126.

and visual arts and crafts, and to revere and respect Southern manners and morals.²³²

Such conflations of race, region, and ethnicity enable white southerners like those in the League of the South to partake of the advantages their skin color confers yet assume the language of an oppressed minority. To understand and confront this agenda, songs like the “Good Old Rebel” and other creative expressions mentioned by Hill will offer valuable evidence of structures of feeling experienced by the unreconstructed South.

²³² “Personal Secession at Tennessee Chapter Meeting,” *Southern Patriot* 2, no. 1, January/February 2008, accessed March 13, 2013, <http://dixienet.org/rights/southernpatriot/spjanfeb08.pdf>; Michael Hill, “President’s Message,” *Southern Patriot* 2, no. 1, January/February 2008, accessed March 13, 2013, <http://dixienet.org/rights/southernpatriot/spjanfeb08.pdf>.

CONCLUSION

LINGERING REBELS

The life of the “Good Old Rebel” presents a narrative fraught with irony. From its duplicitous meaning at birth to its inclusion in the folkloric paradigm to its presence in the cosmology of ethnicized southern whiteness, this song offers a window into the dialectics of culture creation. Furthermore, the story of this song suggests a need for vigilant knowledge of the ways that popular culture appropriates the past. David Blight concludes his formative study of Civil War memory by stating that the years surrounding the semicentennial left the legacy of that conflict “both settled and unsettled,” as “whites and blacks divided and struggled mightily even to know one another across separate societies and an anguished history.”²³³ The various incarnations of the “Good Old Rebel” remind readers that this “anguished history” remains partially owned by unreconstructed southerners, and therefore, just as vital to the current political climate as it was immediately following the Civil War.

At this date in spring 2013, the Republican Party busies itself with rebranding, following its loss of last fall’s presidential election. One may track the loss, and predict future losses, to their failure to court a steadily growing demographic of Latino voters, an issue recently outlined in the party’s *Growth and Opportunity Project*, which bluntly states that “The pervasive

²³³ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 397.

mentality of writing off blocks of states or demographic votes for the Republican Party must be completely forgotten.”²³⁴ Of interest to the present study, political conservatives now struggle to balance a new message of inclusiveness with an image of staunch conservatism that finds its ancestry in the politics of the Confederacy and racial separatism. Historian Nancy MacLean rightly asserts that the contemporary Republican Party shares a lineage with neo-Confederates thanks to that party’s emphases on states’ rights, personal property, laissez faire capitalism, and individualism. Carefully crafted over a half century in response to the near death of federalism during the New Deal, MacLean argues that the paleo-conservatives, “descendants of the Nashville Agrarians and their admirers,” coalesced in the 1950s and 1960s around William F. Buckley, Jr. and the *National Review*, expressing solidarity with the Confederacy as they went and winning their biggest victory with the presidential election of Ronald Reagan. Whether shrouded in Buckley’s intellectualism or overtly expressed by Pat Buchanan’s writings for the *Southern Partisan*, the conservative thinkers of the late twentieth century often aligned themselves with the unreconstructed philosophies of the Confederacy, building an image of whiteness in the process. “Sunbelt corporate liberals and northern neoconservatives have displaced paleo-conservatives,” writes MacLean, but “their ideas were imbibed, or at least tolerated with virtually no public criticism, by northern and western libertarian and traditionalist conservatives.”²³⁵ In short, the GOP’s current remodeling may eventually succeed in creating an inclusive vision of conservatism but not without the protests of a dedicated voting base found in

²³⁴ Henry Barbour et al., *Growth and Opportunity Project*, accessed March 20, 2013, <http://growthopp.gop.com/default.aspx>.

²³⁵ Nancy MacLean, “Neo-Confederacy Verses the New Deal: The Regional Utopia of the Modern American Right,” in *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism* ed. by Matthew D. Lassiter and Joseph Crespino (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 286, Google eBook. For more on the influence of Buckley and the rise modern conservatism, see Grace Elizabeth Hale, *A Nation of Outsiders: How the Middle Class Fell in Love with Rebellion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

the unreconstructed white South. Wherever these Confederate sympathies linger, the “Good Old Rebel” stands close by.

The “Good Old Rebel” haunts the landscape nowhere if not the campus of the University of Mississippi in Oxford, where Rebels still reign as the mascot, be they bears or colonels, depending on one’s politics. Only a few hundred feet from where I now write, a protest/riot commenced on election night, November 6, 2012, which pitted African American against white students over the reelection of Barack Obama. According to a report from Mississippi Public Radio’s Sandra Knispel, approximately four hundred students gathered outside Stockard Hall dormitory after confrontations erupted between the black and white students inside. Knispel’s white interviewee, Jansen, a freshman psychology major who refused to provide his last name, described the scene as two groups of students, racially divided, yelling, and throwing rocks. The white students also burned an Obama/Biden campaign sign in an expression of dissatisfaction and alienation thanks to the outcome of the election. In Jansen’s view, the confrontation escalated because of the African American students. When asked about the racial nature of the protest, Jansen, upset with celebratory demeanor of the Obama supporters, stated, “I think it was more of the boasting and bragging than it was deeply divided over racial issues.” Yet by his own account the “n-word was used also,” as well as the phrase “the south will rise again and stuff of that nature.”

“I don’t have any feeling of shame being part of it. I’m not racist or anything,” Jansen assured listeners. Attempting to explain his position and further diffuse racial critiques of his views, the freshman stated, “we weren’t going after the blacks or anything it was just a standing firm in what we believe in, which is what we do here at the university.” Knispel then presses Jansen for clarification on the specificity of what he so strongly believes to which he replied,

“Well, the Republican side and the Confederate side of the university and then they believe in their side of the university.”²³⁶ For students of history and southern cultures, Jansen’s view of the political landscape may appear as ahistorical and bigoted at first glance, but in essence, he is right. As a white Republican, presumably from the South, Jansen may confidently claim a symbiotic relationship between his political beliefs and “the Confederate side of the university.” After all, until 2009, the University of Mississippi marching band performed “From Dixie With Love” at football games, ending with the students cheering, “the south shall rise again.”²³⁷ Jansen, undoubtedly aware of that now unofficial but still present fight song and cheer, could claim the white protesters were simply expressing their school pride when shouting this phrase at the African American students. Suffering the second defeat of his party in as many elections and possibly the first in which he had voted, Jansen represents an attitude, a Same Cause solidarity, from which the world may expect to hear again.

Students of popular culture may rest assured that music will once again serve as a defining voice for the unreconstructed. Confederate kitsch stalwarts and performers at the most recent Republican National Convention, Lynyrd Skynyrd recently faced a rebellion of their own when their fanbase protested the band’s attempt to distance themselves from the Confederate battle flag. According to a CNN interview with members Gary Rossington, Johnny Van Zant, and Rickey Medlocke from September 9, 2012, the band has eschewed usage of the flag at concerts and album art in an attempt to update its image and distance itself with the banner’s racist overtones. Fans quickly voiced their dissatisfaction through CNN’s comments section,

²³⁶ Sandra Knispel, “Anti-Obama Protest at Ole Miss Opens Old Scars,” *Mississippi Public Broadcasting Online*, November 8, 2012, http://mpbonline.org/News/article/420anti_obama_protest_at_ole_miss_opens_old_scars. For the complete audio interview, see “Thurs, Nov. 8: Ole Miss Upset,” *Mississippi Public Broadcasting Online*, accessed March 21, 2013, <http://mpbonline.org/mississippiedition/me110812/>.

²³⁷ Matt Hinton, “ ‘Dixie’ won’t rise again at Ole Miss any time soon,” *Rivals.com from Yahoo! Sports*, November 11, 2009, http://rivals.yahoo.com/ncaa/football/blog/dr_saturday/post/-Dixie-won-t-rise-again-at-Ole-Miss-any-time-so?urn=ncaaf,201858.

with statements like, “So y'all admit during the interview that the Confederate Flag represents history, heritage and the Confederate soldier, then you stop flying it . . . Good luck with you next release . . . ‘Sweet home Massachusetts.’ I am sure it will climb the charts with a bullet in yankee-land.”²³⁸ Only eleven days later, founding member Rossington backpedaled, posting this address to fans on the band’s Facebook page:

wanted to clarify the discussion of the Confederate Flag in our recent CNN interview. Myself, the past and present members (that are from the South), are all extremely proud of our heritage and being from the South. We know what the Dixie flag represents and its heritage; the Civil War was fought over States rights . . . Heritage not Hate . . .²³⁹

In short, the band quickly saw that the nuances of a complicated and evolving white southern heritage failed to translate to the venues of popular culture. Unreconstructed southerners and their supporters demand strict adherence to the recognizable structures of feeling that inform their identities. For the members of Lynyrd Skynyrd, this devotion may always require the flying of the Confederate flag. Just as the “Good Old Rebel” froze in time the most bitter of postwar resentment, the Lynyrd Skynyrd of the 1970s and 1980s seems to have frozen a particular way of feeling white and southern for the band, concretizing their image as unreconstructed southerners for the foreseeable future.

As mentioned in chapter three, the Southern Nationalist Network comprises a radical fringe of the unreconstructed South and included the “Good Old Rebel” on its “soundtrack of Southern revolution” in 2011. More recently, Michael Cushman, the network’s founder, blogged from the League of the South’s annual national conference in Wetumpka, Alabama. On July 20,

²³⁸ Fredricka Whitfield, “Face to Face: Lynyrd Skynyrd talks Southern roots,” *CNN Newsroom* (blog), September 9, 2012, <http://newsroom.blogs.cnn.com/2012/09/09/lynyrd-skynyrd-talks-southern-roots/>.

²³⁹ Lynyrd Skynyrd’s Facebook page, accessed March 25, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/LynyrdSkynyrd?fref=ts>.

2012, Cushman reported that over two hundred attendees listened to speeches and musical entertainment, stating, “the entire atmosphere is far more hard-core than past League events I’ve attended or watched. This is certainly a positive sign.” The comments below this blog post hold importance for the purposes of the present study. Two days after Cushman’s original report, a user with the screen name “Revolt,” a self-described “Unreconstructed southerner,” wrote, “I think we should adopt, ‘Good Old Rebel’ as the National anthem,” followed by a winking emoticon. Cushman responded in the “Traditional Southern Orthography,” by saying, “My favourite Southern song is ‘The Bonnie Blue Flag’ even though the flag itself is not my favourite.” “Revolt” persisted with “Yep we are in Good old Rebel world now. Post destruction. We need a new Anthem also. The modern version.” On the same day, another user, “CapnConfederacy,” sounded a note of kindred feeling with “Revolt,” believing, “I do love ‘Good ol’ Rebel.’ It describes how I feel after the imperial victory. Works well in this time period.”²⁴⁰

This project might have encountered any number of quintessentially Confederate cultural productions. The song “Dixie,” the rebel yell, the Confederate battle flag, or images of Nathan Bedford Forrest could all serve a similar function as the “Good Old Rebel” has for this study. However, borrowing the words of “CapnConfederacy,” I too believe this song “Works well in this time period.” As secession petitions circulate through the Internet and state legislatures like Mississippi’s reenact battles over nullification, unsuccessfully attempting to establish sovereignty commission, the “Good Old Rebel” appears alive and well.²⁴¹ A larger study may benefit from more engagement with these political manifestations in the unreconstructed South

²⁴⁰ Michael Cushman, “2012 League of the South national conference,” *Southern Nationalist Network* (blog), July 20, 2012, <http://southernnationalist.com/blog/2012/07/20/2012-league-of-the-south-national-conference/>.

²⁴¹ Sam R. Hall, “Mississippi House Bill Would Create Modern-day Sovereignty Commission,” *Daily Ledes* (blog), *The Clarion-Ledger*, January 24, 2013, <http://blogs.clarionledger.com/samrhall/2013/01/24/mississippi-house-bill-would-create-modern-day-sovereignty-commission/>.

and beyond. Specifically, one might explore national iterations of reactionary political ideologies and their intersection with popular culture, especially the alignment of country music and conservative notions of individualism. While the current study grazed these topics, the power of popular culture to dialectically shape and be shaped by the political discourse deserves more investigation by historians. Furthermore, I feel that theories of performance act as a mostly unstated framework for this project and warrant a fuller engagement in the future.

That said, the topic of the Civil War stands as a popular and timely one during the current sesquicentennial celebration, and the battle over its meaning and memory remains active and heated. This fight stands especially visible at the intersection of politics and popular culture. These most recent examples of the unreconstructed South warrant exploration and inclusion here, as they represent the ways in which societies continually grapple with historical memory and how that memory informs political ideologies in their present. Returning to Nora again, the “Good Old Rebel” constitutes just one “fragment” of southern identity but a telling one that deserves the attention of those who consider popular culture more than a text to read. Popular culture presents scholars with documentary evidence of beliefs and structures of feeling through the cultural artifacts they leave in the wake of those attitudes that “won’t be reconstructed” and “don’t care a damn.” As long as unreconstructed southerners exist that feel the “Good Old Rebel” speaks to their place in history, such cultural artifacts require our attention and diligent dismantling whenever they arise.

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